

KOUKOULOFORI:

stories, lessons, and inspiration from the greek anarchist movement

for more copies or further inquiries, email NCpiececorps@gmail.com

KouKoulofori: *"hooded ones," the term used by the Greek media and State to dismissively describe the anarchists without giving them a political content. The singular is koukouloforos. A creative alternative translation that gives a good sense of the connotation of the word is "masketeer." The earlier terms were "provocateurs" and then "known unknowns."*

An Introduction

Like many US anarchists, my first interactions with the Greek anarchist movement occurred primarily through hastily translated communiqués reporting spectacular attacks on banks and police stations, riots, and student occupations. Increasingly filtered through American insurrectionary discourse, what these reports often lacked in historical background or political context they made up for tenfold with enthusiasm and hilariously bad English. Encountering a movement this way resulted in a mythology; for many of us I think "the Greeks" were more or less a fantastic and strange monster, a terrible force that had found some magical alchemy of anarchy that we Americans could never get right. Though conceptualizing anarchy as an unknowable ("opaque") monster has its appeal, creating such a mythology out of a foreign anarchist movement has its problems. Implying that there is something "special" about Greece ignores that the greeks' biggest attribute is probably their self-confidence, not some perfect alignment of social conditions. Some of our biggest obstacles on this side of the Atlantic might be psychological as much as material in nature.

Turning the Greek anarchist movement into a mythology has also meant creating the perfect vehicle for asserting various anarchist sects' particular platforms: syndicalists, if not dismissing Greece as in "a low stage of struggle," focus almost solely on "workers'" actions; insurrectionaries present tale after tale of bombings and fire attacks with almost no discussion of the political context or the thousands of hours of boring, "activist" work that goes into making that context; "anarchists without adjectives" praise the ideological and tactical diversity of the Greeks without acknowledging the tremendously divisive and even violent conflicts between anarchist groups, or the substantive quality of these divisions; and so on.

This 'zine was prompted in large part to get past these stunted narratives, to present at least some of the political background and specific organizational and tactical approaches taken by thousands of active Greek anarchists. It could never be a complete picture, of course, as it is a small publication and primarily based on excerpts from the excellent book *We Are An Image from the Future.* That book, a set of memoirs, analyses, timelines, and theoretical pieces depicting the revolt in December 2008, is not a "history book" but itself an incomplete text on the constantly growing and changing phenomenon of Greek anarchism. More oriented towards cautious observations and lessons relevant to those on this side of the Atlantic, I've

national elections. Three men and one woman are arrested and given terrorism charges. One is released on provisional liberty awaiting trial, with the terrorism charges dropped. Six other people are wanted by police. In the months since December, the group had claimed responsibility for 160 attacks.

-2 October: The Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire take responsibility for a small bomb placed close to the stage where current Prime Minister and candidate for ND is giving a major public speech, just two days before the election.

-4 October: PASOK win the national elections, which had been called largely in response to the political crisis of legitimacy exacerbated by December, and the December revolt proves to be a major election topic. 30% of eligible voters abstain (compared with 26% in 2007), PASOK takes 43.9% of the votes, ND takes 33.5% (their lowest polling ever), KKE takes 7.5%, LAOS takes 5.6%, SYRIZA takes 4.6%. The Green Party, with only 2.5%, do not win enough votes to enter Parliament.

-7 October: Three days after the elections, Prime Minister-elect Giorgos Papandreou (son of the legendary former Prime Minister) says in a public speech to his new ministers, "We must be like antiauthoritarians in authority... our main target is to bring equality to all genders, races, economic classes, and nationalities, bringing together all differences," revealing both how much the real antiauthoritarians had influenced the political structure, and also hinting at the strategy of the Socialists for recuperating the revolt.

Meanwhile, anarchists and the extreme Left riot nearby in Istanbul, Turkey, in protest of the International Monetary Fund, while World Bank president Robert Zoellick declares an end to the days of elitist decision-making without input from developing countries, mirroring the PASOK rhetoric.

-8 October: At midday, about thirty koukoulofori in Exarchia smash out the windows of a half dozen corporate targets, including the National Bank of Athens and a fascist bookstore, as well as a few luxury vehicles, disappearing before the arrival of Delta Force, units of which had been parked nearby. That night, hundreds of police invade the neighborhood, searching some 200 people, 81 of whom are taken to the police station and 8 of whom are arrested (for poverty-related crimes). They also search 16 automobiles and 26 cafes.

-10 October: In the afternoon, several hundred residents of Exarchia and anarchists hold a protest against the police occupation, angrily confronting a line of riot police guarding a government building, but deciding not to attack. The neighborhood assembly of Exarchia has decided to permanently resist the repressive measures. At night, on Strefi Hill above Exarchia, four thousand young people take over the park for an unpermitted free festival with DJs,VJs, and bands. At one point Delta Force makes a threatening show of force but leaves without provoking a fight.

The neighborhood assembly continues holding protests twice a week, bringing thousands of people together to march from Exarchia square to Parliament and back, vowing to continue until the police presence is removed. The struggle continues...

anarchist group. In contrast, most other anarchist firebombings and attacks were claimed by groups that disappeared after signing their name to only one or two communiques.

-12 July: A large refugee camp in Patras is mysteriously burned to the ground during a police operation. The city subsequently bulldozes the remains, preventing its reconstruction.

-14 July: Villagers near Chaldiki block the road to Scouries, which a major gold-mining corporation wants to exploit and destroy. In Athens, protestors attack the central tower of the National Telecommunications Company with black paint, with the support of many workers there, after the company sues the Polytechnic University for hosting the Athens Indymedia server. Protestors claim the company is taking cues from LAOS politicians who want to gag radical dissent.

-22 July: Police defuse a bomb placed by the Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire in front of the Chilean consulate in Thessaloniki, in memory of Mauricio Molares Duarte who had recently died while carrying a bomb meant for a police target in Santiago.

-August: Dozens of actions, from gas canister bombings to radio station occupations, occur all across Greece in solidarity with the last prisoner of December, Thodoros Iliopoulos, who is still on hungerstrike. Thodoros is subsequently released. Also, the occupied social centers all across Greece continue to maintain and also defend themselves, and the occupied parks expand, with the planting of more trees and flowers, the construction of playgrounds and tile mosaic walkways, becoming more beautiful than any park the State has ever produced....

-10 August: Eco-anarchist group "Animals' Revenge" rescues 7000 mink from two different fur farms in Kozani, north Greece, causing hundreds of thousands of euros in damages.

-21 August: Major forest fires begin just north of Athens and burn for four days, destroying 40,000 hectares of forest, olive grove, and shrub land. Many people understand that these fires are set intentionally by real estate developers.

-25-31 August: Anarchists and leftists hold a No Border Camp, amidst an extreme police presence, at Mytilini, on the island of Lesvos, near Turkey.

2 September: Revolutionary Struggle bombs the Athens Stock Exchange, calling in a bomb threat first to avoid casualties. The building is heavily damaged by the huge blast.

-5 September: Athens police chase some people painting graffiti into Exarchia, where a crowd gathers attempting to stop the arrests. Delta Force arrives and they attack anarchists throughout the neighborhood, yell at neighbors, smash things in the occupied park, and generally behave like hooligans. They arrest five people though all are later released with charges dropped. Police kick one of the detainees until they rupture his lung.

-23 September: A suspected cell of the Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire is caught by police in Athens after the explosion of a small bomb in front of the house of an ex-Minister of Finance and PASOK member, just days before PASOK wins the

included several pieces written by non-Greek authors who seem to have one foot in Greece and one foot in their home country, as I think this position offers a unique level of awareness and perspective on the situation.

I was also prompted to assemble this publication by my recent visit to Greece, and several surrounding countries. Though I was only there for a brief time, and only visited three cities, it was an overwhelming and incredible experience. A week and half before the visit, on May 5th, 2010, three innocent workers were killed by a fire bombing of a bank during one of the country's largest and most militant general strikes in recent history. To my knowledge this was an unprecedented occurrence, and during my time there, anarchists all over the country were wrestling with the meanings and consequences of this careless action, both internally and with the public at large. A large part of my discussions there centered around these deaths, contextualized by the fact that over the last 10 years the Greek anarchist movement has essentially catalyzed a low-level civil war both dependent upon the anarchists but at the same time far beyond them in scope.

Despite the tragedy, and the differing perspectives thereof, I was impressed with the maturity, sincerity, and care put into the discussions, and the comrades' refusal to sound any bells of retreat or capitulation with the State. Anarchists knew that the government and the institutionalized Left would exploit these deaths to repress their struggle, and were proactively prepared to deal with that. One of the Greek anarchists' strengths, and one of their notable differences from the American movement, has always been knowing that the best defense is usually a good *offense*. It remains to be seen if popular support (which has not necessarily diminished) and internal divisiveness will allow them to preserve this offensive. For the sake of us all, I hope they can.

sweet tea,
north carolina piece corps correspondent

Chronology: September 2000 - November 2008

-September 2000: Greek anarchists participate in the Black Bloc during the international mobilization against the International Monetary Fund meeting in Prague, making connections and creating mutual influence with the anarchist movements of other countries. They subsequently played a major role in the protests against the G8 in Genova, Italy, in 2001.
-May 2002: Anarchists in Iraklion squat a former hopsital, Evangelismos, creating one of the biggest squats in all Crete, that plays an important role in spreading anarchist ideas throughout the island in the following years. The squat still exists in 2009.
-June 2003: Greek anarchists with comrades from abroad play a major role in the mobilizations, protests, and riots against the European Union Summit in Thessaloniki. During the organization of these protests, the organization Antiauthoritarian Current (AK) is created, establishing assemblies and social centers in many major cities of Greece. They also attempt to be a nationwide organization similar to the earlier Anarchist Union.
-2004: The Olympic Games come to Athens, and with them the usual accompaniment of urban renewal, ethnic cleansing, heavy policing, and technologies of social control. The first neighborhood assemblies arise to defend the areas of Akropolis and Exarchia from the results of the Games, and there are also solidarity campaigns with the hyper-exploited immigrant workers doing most of the construction. However these struggles are not so successful.
-20 March 2004: Anarchists in Thessaloniki squat a huge abandoned factory to create the social center Fabrika Yfanet.
-1 May 2005: AK organizes a demonstration of dignity and solidarity for the workers at the shipyards of Perama, an area that is hit with many economical problems.
-22-28 August 2005: Anarchists in Bulgaria and Greece organize a No Border Camp on both sides of the border, including an attack on a detention facility that is later closed down. Some immigrants held there are liberated during the attack.
-2006-2007: Students across Greece occupy their universities and create a major movement against the restructuring of higher education under the European Union's Plan Bolonya. Despite the strong resistance, the restructuring was passed into law in March 2007, though the politicians had to do it with the smell of teargas in the air and the sound of fireworks exploding outside the front door of Parliament. However, the students did not give up their struggle and this pressure has prevented the university administrations from implementing the legal changes.
-23 April 2007: After imprisoned anarchist bankrobber Yiannis Dimitrakis is beaten by prison guards, other prisoners riot in solidarity in Malandrinos prison and subsequently in all major prisons in the country. Outside the prisons there are several solidarity actions, including anarchist groups on motorcycle attacking police stations with molotov cocktails.
-August 2007: Major forest fires break out across Greece in a coordinated way,

lar attacks against LAOS are carried out in several other cities over these weeks, accompanied by accusations that they coordinate with paramilitary groups inside the police to repress the social movements.
-June: Fascists in the Athens neighborhood of Aghios Panteleimonos stir up racism against the strong immigrant presence in a local park, situated near a church that was giving aid to undocumented people. The fascists instigate a rightwing neighborhood assembly that occupies the park and kicks out the immigrants, protected by the riot police and supported by the Minister of Public Order. Shortly after the Minister speaks at the rightwing assembly, fascists attack the nearby anarcho-punk squat Villa Amalias with firebombs. On the 9th of June, anarchists manage to fight off the fascists and open the playground, but they are subsequently attacked by police. They injure one cop, but five are arrested.
-4 June: A police station in northern Athens is attacked by ten hooded anarchists with molotovs.Meanwhile three banks in different parts of Athens are firebombed at the same time.
-7 June: Early in the morning, a group of hooded assailants attack a police station in Patras with molotovs and escape on motorcycle.
-8 June: A bank in Thessaloniki is torched with a gas canister bomb.
-11 June: About twenty hooded anarchists attack a group of police in Exarchia with molotovs and escape on foot.
-17 June: In Athens the Sect of Revolutionaries assassinates a policeman who was guarding the home of a prosecution's witness in the terror trial of members of ELA. In a subsequent communique, they threaten to target politicians and journalists, and include "everyday life" and "normal people" in a long catalogue of enemies of the revolution.
-2-4 July: In response to the collaboration between the State and the neo-nazis, the Interior Ministry, the political office of the ex-Minister of Public Order, the offices of an advisory think tank for the military, the Institute for Immigration Policy think tank, and the car of the president of the Constitutional Court are targeted in a barrage of arson attacks claimed by "Combat Groups for the Elimination of the Nation."
-7 July: Three thousand people in Athens and one thousand people in Thessaloniki march in solidarity with immigrants. Fascists attempt to attack the Athens march with molotovs. Demonstrators blockade Patision avenue outside ASOEE, burning dumpsters and fighting with police and fascists into the night.
-8 July: The last remaining prisoner of December, Thodoros Iliopoulos, is denied bail on the grounds that he is an anarchist and a "danger to democracy." He goes on hungerstrike in protest.
-10 July: A riot police bus is fired upon in Athens, forcing the cops to abandon the bus and run for their lives.
-11 July: The Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire carries out a bomb attack against the home of a former Interior Minister and warns that the new National Intelligence Chief could be next. Dozens of firebombings have already been claimed by this

around the G20 protests, during which one older demonstrator was killed by police violence.
-16-18 April: A string of arson attacks in Xanthi targets the house of a police informant, the ATM of the central bank, the luxury car of the city's bishop, and the car of chief justice of the city.
-25 April: Five thousand people take over a pedestrian street below the Acropolis for a DIY punk concert, one of several massive public, open air free festivals, concerts, and illegal raves to occur throughout the spring and summer.
-28 April: Three thousand people march from the occupied park in Exarchia to the occupied park on Patision in opposition to the new anti-protest law criminalizing wearing masks or insulting police officers. Along the route, many CCTV cameras and banks are smashed. One thousand people, mostly anarchists, march in Thessaloniki in support of the occupations.
-9 May: The neo-nazi group Golden Dawn, together with the MAT, hold a protest against immigrants in Omonia. Anarchists who try to attack the protest are pushed back by riot police, and fighting occurs around the Polytechnic.
-12 May: A branch of Eurobank in Athens is destroyed by a bomb. The same day, an arson attack targets the national electricity company in response to the deaths of two workers.
-18 May: A barrage of simultaneous arsons in eleven different areas of Athens target a shop selling police uniforms, a police training school, a surveillance systems corporation that works with police, two shops that sell guns to police, the central office of a private security company in a wealthy neighborhood, a Suzuki exhibition that provides the police with motorbikes, two private motorbikes and two private cars of cops parked outside their houses, and an exhibition of Skoda, a company that provides the police with vehicles. The communique was signed by "Enflamed Shadows." In the preceding days, similar attacks also occur in Thessaloniki and in Hania.
-20 May: Police raid a cafe in Athens where many migrants gather. During the raid they tear up a Koran. Over the next two days immigrants organize several demonstrations and attack the police with stones. Hundreds participate, and police respond with teargas. Sixteen are arrested, one, a Syrian immigrant, for throwing a molotov at a police station. Seventy-five cars, five shops, and one bank are damaged or destroyed.
-27-31 May: Forty thousand people participate in B-Fest, a weeklong festival on the campus of the University for Fine Arts that includes concerts, raves, and a multi-day international conference that features anarchist and autonomist speakers from other countries, such as Noam Chomsky (via video feed), Bifo, Class War editors, and Michael Albert.
-28 May: The Antisexist Faction commits an arson attack against two high-end brothels, "not for them [the sex workers] but for us." Their communique also mentions the trafficking of women.
-29 May: The offices of fascist party LAOS are smashed in the city of Pyrgos. Simi-

burning huge swaths of forest and killing dozens of people. Many Greeks realize that these fires are set by developers who want to clear land for construction, as Greek law prohibits construction in forested areas. More than 5000 people from a diversity of economic classes and cultural backgrounds gather outside Parliament to shout at all the political parties, "kick them all out!"
-18 August 2007: In Thessaloniki, Nigerian immigrant Tony Onoya dies after a run-in with police who had previously beat him up. Officially, he died falling off a balcony while trying to escape, but immigrant eyewitnesses say he was pushed. Subsequently, hundreds of Nigerians and other immigrants, joined by local anarchists and antiauthoritarians, gather and riot.
-30 January 2008: Immigrants along with AK Patras and the Network for the Defense of Immigrants organize a protest that brings together over 1,500 immigrants, mostly Afghans, calling for asylum and respect for their human rights.
-2 February 2008: About 60 members of the Greek neo-nazi group Golden Dawn attempt to march in Athens. They are attacked by 400 anarchists and extreme leftists, but the police move in to protect the fascists and attack the anarchists. During the resulting riot, fascists and riot police work together on the streets to fight against anarchists. The collaboration is caught on video and aired widely, proving to Greek society the link between the police and the fascists. The same day, about ten anarchists on motorbike attack an Athens police station with molotovs, and the next day about twenty hooded anarchists on foot throw molotovs at a group of riot police guarding the Socialist Party offices in Athens.
-June 2008: Wealthy Greek industrialist Giorgos Mylonas is kidnapped after he made a comment that Greek workers would simply have to tighten their belts to survive new austerity measures. His wife pays 12 million euros for his release. In their communique the kidnappers say that workers are kidnapped and ransomed every day of their lives. It is later learned that the four kidnappers include anarchists Polikarpos Georgiadis and Vaggelis Hrisohoides, along with legendary outlaw Vassilis Palaiokostas, who with his brother Nikos has been carrying out robberies and prison breaks for decades.
-29-31 August 2008: Anti-authoritarians and people from the far Left hold a No Border Camp in Patras, demonstrating in solidarity with the immigrants in the port city, which is a common entry point to Italy and the rest of Europe.
-November 2008: Eight thousand prisoners all across Greece participate in a hungerstrike, pressing sixteen demands. Antiauthoritarians inside and outside the prison strongly support the struggle. The prisoners win the majority of their demands.
-5 December 2008: Normality reigns. No one predicts anything out of the ordinary. Horoscopes call for more of the same.
timeline...

“The Supermarket Expropriations were very Successful”
Nikos, an anarchist from Athens, active for about ten years

One action that started happening more frequently in the year before December were expropriations in the supermarkets. We would gather with a group of at least thirty people, mask up, run into a major supermarket and fill carts with food. The timing was very important. Inside the store everyone knew what they had to do, everyone stayed in a group and didn't go down any aisle alone, and we were all out of there in a minute. Sometimes, some people would calm the workers there, saying that it was an expropriation, that all the food would be distributed for free, we were against property but we didn't want to hurt anybody. And we always made sure to get out of there very quickly. It all took just a few seconds.

In Athens we usually did these expropriations close to open air markets, when lots of people were outside shopping. That way, we would not have to go far to find a place where lots of people were gathered to leave the food. After we did this a few times, when the people saw us, they would cry out excitedly, “It's them! It's them!” and they would cheer us and they were very happy to take the food. It was a nice feeling, to include all these people in our illegality. Also, they learned not to be afraid of the *koukoulofori*. The people who were masked up, dressed in black, and doing outrageous things were on their side. That was very important.

“Exarchia Square and the Neighborhood Assemblies”
Argiris, a longtime anarchist activist from Athens

So it was like this. We were sitting in a house, something like four hundred meters away from Exarchia Square. This was around June, 2003. It was like 2:30 in the afternoon, we were drinking coffee and smoking the first joint of the day. And suddenly they called us on the telephone. Our friend was in the square, she said to us that there were some workers on the square, and some machines, construction machines, and it was looking like they wanted to begin some construction on the square, in the general spirit of construction for the Olympic games. At that period there was gentrification in all the city for the Olympics. So immediately we understood that our turn had come to face this problem in the square. The funniest thing I remember is that immediately from the moment we hung up the telephone, though we were just four people in the middle of a big city, we had a natural, powerful feeling that we could stop all the Mayor's construction projects by ourselves. The most interesting feeling for me that afternoon was this passionate enthusiasm that had no rationality inside it, just this feeling of power and commitment. Because we decided that this would never happen, it would never happen for sure. We were sure. There were four of us walking to the square and I felt like I belonged to an army.

It was like we were carrying a monster with us, and this monster was the reputation, the mythology of the anarchist movement in general. We carried with

Chronology: March - October 2009

-7 March: Four thousand people of Exarchia rip down the wall around a vacant lot destined to become a parking garage, tear up the asphalt with jackhammers, plant trees, and create a free park fifty meters away from the spot where Alexis was killed.
-9 March: In separate incidents in Athens, a group of youths smash two banks in the middle of the afternoon, while early in the morning a homemade bomb explodes outside a Citibank branch, causing extensive damages and no injuries.
-13 March: Fifty masked anarchists smash dozens of luxury shops in Kolonaki, the wealthy downtown district of Athens, in broad daylight, distributing flyers in solidarity with anarchist prisoner Yiorgos Voutsis-Votzatzis, and disappearing before police arrive.
-Mid-March: Spectacularizing the Kolonaki attacks, the media go into overdrive presenting the anarchists as a threat to order. The government announces several new security measures, including announced changes in the law to aid the criminalization of protests, the arrival of police consultants from Scotland Yard, and the creation of Delta Force, a new police corps that will patrol on motorbikes and function as a rapid response force.
-21 March: After hearing about the assassination of prisoner activist Katerina Goulioni, women prisoners in Chania and Thiva revolt and occupy their prisons.
-30 March: The various squatted parks, social centers, and assemblies of Athens convoke thousands of people in a major protest march, starting at the new Navarinou Park in Exarchia and ending at City Hall.
-31 March: Anarchists occupy the President's Office of Athens University at Panepistimio, hanging a huge banner from the front of the building calling for solidarity with all squatted and self-organized spaces throughout the country, on and off the universities, as well as for university asylum.
-1 April: Kouzina Collective appears in Athens, serving free food in public. The same day, in Iraklion, three hundred people hold a demonstration in solidarity with those arrested in December.
-2 April: During the national general strike day, 50,000 people demonstrate in the streets of Athens while major demonstrations take place in other cities. In the middle of the demo a group of anarchists smash the Athens offices of OIKOMET while members of Kuneva's union, with protection from anarchists and autonomists, occupy the offices of the train company, forcing them to cancel their contract with OIKOMET and give the cleaners permanent contracts directly with the public transportation company.
-4 April: Members of the neighborhood assembly of Petralona (Athens) along with the Assembly for Health, occupy PIKPA, a two-storey former hospital, in order to establish a social center that will be used for many events and as a facility to provide free healthcare for the neighborhood.
-15 April: The British College in Thessaloniki is attacked with a gas canister bomb in solidarity with the people arrested and repressed in London and Nottingham

-Independent amateur videos, like the video of the assassination of Alexis or moments of police brutality, played a very important role in the building of a new kind of public opinion.

-The creation of hundreds of blogs by all kinds of initiatives offered a digital space for the direct expression of the reasons and the theory of each struggle and attracted thousands of readers and participants. The blogs broke the authority and monopoly of mainstream mass media forever.

-The unstoppable writing, printing and hand to hand FREE distribution of hundreds of different publications, pamphlets, books, cds, dvds and the creation and sticking of thousands of posters in all cities bring the analysis to a level capable of covering many different subjects and reaching nearly every part of society. Also, they express the anarchist way of thinking directly to the other people of our times, and not through abstract theories and ideological labyrinths.



us all the power of all the actions that had come before us. We were not just four people, we were 2000 people.

And so when we arrived there, we went directly to the workers and we asked, *What are you doing here? Who is responsible for this work?*

They say, *We don't know, we don't know,* but they pointed out this fat guy in the cafe drinking a frappe and overseeing the work. He was in charge. And as we went to speak to this man, we saw that they had already made a big hole, 1.5 meters deep, 2 meters wide. So we go to this man and we ask him, *Why are you here? What do you want to do?*

They've made a plan for big changes to the square, he said. The planning is already decided. He's not responsible for these decisions but he's responsible for finishing the construction. And we asked him very politely, *What is the plan, what will the square look like?*

He said they would throw away the statue, the classical statue in the middle of the square with the ancient god Eros. The statue was symbolic for the punks and it was something like a guardian angel for the junkies who hung out there. They write graffiti on it, sticking posters or announcements. It is the symbolic center of the square.

We're surprised, so we ask if he's sure they were going to remove the statue. He says, *Yes, all the middle of the square will be taken up by a pool, with a fountain.*

The benches of the square were old, falling apart, so we asked about the benches, will they put in new benches?

No, we're going to rip it all out and put in new things.

What kind of new things?

We will put in a cement platform for the people to sit on.

How is it possible for old people to sit on this cement thing? No one will come to sit.

It doesn't matter, normal people don't hang out here. I don't care what you say, it's already planned.

So we said to him, *You stay here and wait, just see what happens.*

All that afternoon, there were many people like us calling each other and talking about this. And through this, an assembly for Exarchia Square was called. So next afternoon, spreading the word by phone or word of mouth, about 400 people gathered. Half of them were inhabitants of the area, and half were anarchists who hung out on the square. And then we went and we threw all the construction machines in this hole, destroyed them, we told the workers that the people of the square would not allow them to work here, we would not allow them to build a metal barrier around the square to hide the construction from the public view. And we said that whatever construction will happen in the future, the locals will decide the design, and any construction will happen in the public view. Out of this struggle the Assembly of the "Initiative of Exarchia Residents" was born, and this assembly continues today, playing an important role in resisting the police

presence in the neighborhood.

Because of this organized struggle, the construction stopped for many months, and in the period that followed, the representatives from the assembly of Exarchia went to the construction company and asked about the planning. In the beginning, the company said that because they were a private company they didn't have any obligation to show us the plans. So the assembly decided they didn't have to allow any construction, and that only if the construction company accepts the architectural ideas of the assembly would any construction be allowed to happen. So the assembly prepared plans, which inclued an expansion of the green area of the square, to add more trees and bushes, keep the statue, not put in the fountain, and they would install new high quality benches.

In the first months, the mayor of the city sent riot police to guard the construction site. But because of the inhabitants' negation of the plan, the riot police could not save the construction project. They couldn't enforce it themselves. And after one month the riot police left, because everytime they went away for a moment, we destroyed the machines and the metal construction barriers. Three times this happened. So the works stopped. And they stopped for almost one year. And it was very funny because during that period, there was no cement, the construction workers had taken away all the paving stones to prepare the construction. Suddenly Exarchia Square was bare earth. So in the meantime we enjoyed this, we put up a volleyball net and announced that now we had a beach in the square.

To defend the square, the anarcho-punks stayed there. All around the square all different sorts of people regularly gathered, but in the middle of the square it was the anarcho-punks. This lasted for almost one year, the period of the beach in the park.

Due to all these factors, the construction company realized they had to accept the planning of the inhabitants' assembly, and they announced their concession. As this was the period of the reconstruction around the Acropolis, for the Olympics, this was when the first two neighborhood assemblies started. Philopapou, around the Acropolis, was the first one, and then the assembly of the inhabitants of Exarchia. Both of these assemblies were successful in stopping construction projects and stopping gentrification. The spirit of these two assemblies produced many other neighborhood assemblies in other parts of Athens and other cities throughout Greece.

This was the beginning of a new period in the anarchist movement, the meeting of the powerful direct action of the anarchists with the interests and the hopes of the inhabitants, their dreams for their own neighborhood. The inhabitants felt that this confluence between their dreams and the power of the direct actions of the insurrectionist anarchists, that it was good.

to temporarily liberated public zones. They offer an existential contact with the underground cultures and the radical movements. The gatherings of the underground cultures, when they are connected in solidarity with the anarchist political space, offer an experiential introduction to the political and social awareness that cannot be replicated in books.

-The demonstrations in malls and luxury areas or in the metro stations transfer the message of insurrection to privatized public spaces at the center of capitalistic illusions.

- The occupation of the National Opera Hall and interruption of the commercial shows created an example of a meeting point between the sphere of the arts and philosophy and the insurrectionary practices and ideas.

-The occupation of the building of the General Confederation of Greek Workers created a public, visible negation of the role of syndicalist leadership in the failures of workers' struggles over the last 100 years.

- The occupation of the offices of the newspaper editors by insurrected journalists and comrades active in the creation of undergroud media produced a lively meeting point for direct critisism to appear against the role of mass media in the building of social apathy.

- The occupation of the National Television Station studio by young artists and activists trashed the speech of the prime mininster, expanded mistrust of the mass media, and sent the message onto the screen of every house in Greece: "Switch Off Your TV, Come Into The Streets."

- Occupations of government buildings and municipalities all over the country sent to the society the message of a different understanding of public institutions and constituted victorious fights in different causes and struggles.
-The anti-nazi struggle sends the message that there is no mercy for the enemies of freedom.

-The anti-nazi demonstrations in solidarity with the immigrants made obvious to all immigrants that we are standing on their side (but not without criticism of their own limitations).

-Videos and media work uploaded to the internet and used by mainstream TV channels proved that the police are working with neo-nazis against the immigrants and the social movements. Also they proved to everybody that the neo-nazis are a tool, the long hand of the State against any kind of social resistance.

-The defense of public autonomous zones like parks and urban hills and universities as well as urban areas, street corners, squares and meeting points like Exarchia and other similar points in the rest of Greece from police, mafia, drug dealers, neo-nazis and capitalist investors brings the people together. These meetings in public space produce an explosive mixture of all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds who get used to facing the policeman, the mafia, the drug dealer, the neo-nazi and the investor as an enemy. The day to day meetings in the public space empower the groups and the companies of friends to be ready and capable of fighting against the enemies at a moment's notice and to imagine that this area is something completely different from the surrounding territory.

-The empowerment of the imagination, intelligence, and critical mind is the best strategy.

-The solidarity movements encourage the people to continue fighting and take care, as much as possible, of the prisoners of this war.

-The open public solidarity for all prisoners, criminal and political prisoners equally, expresses the total negation towards prison institutions, reveals the real causes of criminality in this society and brings the anarchist prisoners closer with all other prisoners, gaining respect and support for them inside the prison.

-The fight for Kostantina Kuneva and all other workers sends a direct message to the bosses that when they hit one of us they have to confront all of us. Also, it proves that the collective struggle can reveal subject matters and attract the focus of all society.

-All direct syndicalist struggles self-organized from the base prepare in the consciousness of the people, year after year, a deep-rooted, radical strategy that intervenes in the sphere of work.

-Indymedia works like a strategic center for the organization of the struggles and as a digital public space where all the announcements, debates, and invitations can gain attention. In a way, all comrades start their day reading the indymedia calendar to decide what social action or assembly they will participate in.

- The creation of pirate communal radio stations and digital radio stations in universities and social centers sends the message of resistance on the radio waves and creates cultural and political communities around them.

- The critical mass parades, the street parades, the free party movement, the illegal rave parties, the squat events, the DIY concerts, the socially aware hip-hop, punk, indie rock, drum 'n bass, techno & trance scenes attract thousands of young people

What Greece Means (to me) for Anarchism

A.G. Schwarz

Approximately two years before the insurrection flared up in Greece in December, some anarchists of the Platformist persuasion embarrassingly identified Greece as a country of low social struggle, to back up their mechanistic theory that the insurrectionist strain of anarchism only arises during lows, i.e. it is a product of weakness. After December, other anarchists who were convinced that workers were the only legitimate revolutionary subject either minimized the importance of the revolt because the working class as such did not participate, or they skewed and entirely misunderstood the events by emphasizing news of the protests by base unions and the blockades by farmers, as though the irresponsible adventurism of molotov cocktails and firebombs was a phenomenon that existed somehow outside the events.

On the other hand, insurrectionary anarchists surviving in the most alienated of countries seemed to subsist entirely on a diet of digital imagery and poorly translated poetic communiques, snapshots infused with the smell of burning shops but completely separated from their social context, as though these anarchists somehow hungered even more than the media to kill the revolt by spectacularizing it. And while most Greek anarchists I know tend to share the insurrectionary critique of the Left, or more accurately, they simply take it as self-evident, many Western insurrectionists would be shocked to hear the widespread opinion that "insurrectionary anarchism [referring to the Italian school] has had very little influence here." Which does not contradict the fact that illegalist and individualist tendencies were passionately adopted by many segments of the anarchist space in the '90s; however this has manifested as an entirely different phenomenon from the many blogs and papers in English that regurgitate "notes from the global civil war," little news clippings of violent actions from here and there completely stripped of their social context and thus of their political content. I understand the need, in a pacified setting, to glorify the very act of violent resistance itself, but I'm afraid these comrades are digging themselves into a hole every bit as deep as the one constituted by the idealization of a class that sixty years ago willingly adopted all the characteristics of its enemy and dissolved itself.

What happened in Greece arose out of a specific culture and history of struggle. It is not an ideological tool to be used for any faction nor a blueprint to be transported to another country or context. It would be a shame for anarchists to convert the Greek rebellion into a dogmatic plank or to ignore it because it does not confirm a preconceived ideology. And as much as I would like to, it would be wrong of me to use Greece as a tool to urge greater cooperation and solidarity between different antiauthoritarian currents, because all the infighting, the sharp criticisms regarding important questions, are a part of the history of this insurrection, and the rebellion itself was claimed to confirm or contradict people's idea of revolution.

The truth is that all these contradicting currents made up the revolt, and a key characteristic of the revolt that the State and media worked so hard to deny is that at times, in the streets, the many people who were supposed to be different and separate became indistinguishable. But without denying any of the elements that participated, we can and should look at the role they each played, what made them stronger, and what made them weaker.

We are storytellers, not historians. Our job is to relate these happenings to you, not to separate, to objectify, to engrave these living stories and rob them of any connection to the present moment. Just as the solidarity actions in other countries lent more fire to the ongoing insurrection in Greece, the exhilirating smell of smoke rose from Athens and spread around the world. I cannot see it as disconnected that it was also a hot winter in Sofia, Malmö, Oakland, and Guadelupe, nor that anarchists around the world stepped up the struggle after seeing what was going on in Greece.

Several months after December, I was at a small protest in one of those northern social democratic countries where such things as riots aren't meant to happen anymore. But when the police attacked, even though there were only a hundred people in the demo, they rioted, and when the police broke up the riot, they dispersed throughout the city to take revenge by setting afire symbols of wealth, property, and authority. The only similarity between their situation and Greece was that in both places people had the confidence to fight back. And that is an element that no material conditions and no historical process can give you. It may be easier to come by in some cultures than in others but it is entirely yours to claim or disown.

Anarchists had enough confidence in their ideas to communicate them with society, and enough confidence that their struggle was right that they continued attacking the State...even when they were the only ones doing so.

Confidence played a major role in the Greek anarchist practice in all the years before December. Anarchists had enough confidence in their ideas to communicate them with society, and enough confidence that their struggle was right that they continued attacking the State and boldly upholding an ethic of solidarity with all the oppressed and no compromise with authority, even when they were the only ones doing so.

And in this way they won presence in their society, and everyone, even if they disagreed, knew who the anarchists were—the ones who fought against all authority, who stood alongside the most marginalized members of society, the ones who self-organized, and the ones who never acted like politicians. This social connection was perhaps the greatest foundation of the insurrection. Many anarchists insisted on seeing society as distinct from the State. They participated in all the social struggles, offering a different analysis than the political parties and refusing to sugarcoat or hide their radical ideas, even when this made communication more

copies of communiqués and books that you hand out for free in your city. These practices go together with the unstoppable use of spraypaint to write political slogans on every wall, signed with the circle-A, and to remove any neo-nazi graffiti. Also comrades go frequently to the central square of their city with a small electric generator and small sound system to play their music and read off their communiques, and to spread pamphlets. With this method of counter-information they attract the focus of the people to specific social struggles, they raise solidarity and have endless dialogues with passersby.

What are some specific examples?

-The neighborhood assemblies, organized with invitation posters from door to door, offer answers to local problems and connect them with the general social problems.

-The occupied parks offer a direct connection between ecological problems and every day urban life and produce new liberated public spaces where different kinds of people can meet and co-exist (or try to co-exist).

-The different new squats enable all different styles of anarchist thinking to achieve visibility.

-The new social centers offer workshops, free lessons, free food, cheap alcohol, free books, lectures, film shows, DJ sets, concerts, and open social meeting points for all kinds of people. They connect the political activists with common people and young students

- The small urban guerilla arson groups continue fighting. Formed by people who know and trust each other 100% they continue to upgrade their weekly attacks against capitalist and state targets. These huge catalogues of arson attacks expand the cartography of institutions, corporations, banks, and offices that society has to eliminate from social life for the people to be free and equal. In this way, the arsonists offer the society a signal that elevates mistrust of these specific targets and encourages suspicion regarding the exploitive function of these targets.

-The active anarchist student groups don't allow the bourgeoisie to control the university. These groups communicate day by day with each other and with all other students. They turn the university into a public space that can accommodate tens of public events every week, organized by comrades from other political and cultural collectives as well. Of course leftist organizations and cultural groups also participate in the struggle to defend university asylum and the struggle for keeping the universities open to the public overnight.

December Revisited

An excerpt from a longer text by the Void Network, based on questions from American anarchists

What new tools and strategies do people have since December?

The most important characteristics are:

Consistency: efforts to offer answers and direct responses to all the moves of the State and to keep the fight alive with actions and events that take place almost every day. Also, there are conscious efforts to avoid suicidal or sacrificial moves that will cause arrests or hard defeats. The riots and the clashes with the police are well organized, well equipped, and they occur at the place and time when they'll have the greatest possibility of causing the most damage without paying a high price or putting people in serious danger. With these victories the struggle attracts new people.

Political Work: based on direct connection with the problems of the society and not on ideological abstractions. The efforts to listen to the society, keep in contact with the worries and fears of the people, give answers where it seems that there are no answers, and attack the causes of the problems, not just the results. The ability of the movement to play a serious role in the political world of the country depends on the creation of deep roots in the social struggles and the ability to inject anarchist ideas and practices into the hearts of common people and young radicals. This happens through the personal cultivation of critical minds and the collective creation of open, all-inclusive public confrontation with all forms of authority.

Cultural Work: the meetings, the assemblies, the squares, the parks, and the public life tend to include people who have the courage to fight and the capability to think and create. For the first time in many years anarchists now are ready to achieve high visibility in this society and attract new people not only through their destructive power but also through the defense of public spaces (like the parks), and the creation of political spaces (like the squats and the social centers in all Greece). Also important is the collective culture that allows all individuals to benefit from the communes without losing their personalities within them, as happens in the Left tradition of organizing.

Constant Spreading of Counter-Information: the importance of typography, (not digital printing but 70cm x 50 cm offset printing!) for printing thousands of copies of large posters and sticking them everywhere is vital. As all different groups produce many different posters, a whole spectrum of theory appears on the walls of the city. You don't need to read anarchist books anymore. The theory is on the walls! Of course it is also very important to use offset machines (!) for thousands of

difficult in the shortterm. And whenever there was a social problem or important event or tragedy, they would meet and take the initiative to respond, so that the government did not have a monopoly on discourse while managing the problem. The anarchists created examples of uncompromising struggles, and trusted that when people were ready they would choose to adopt these examples as their own.

There are also many antisocial elements within the anarchist space, and these play an important role as well, because even though society is our most crucial ally, there are plenty of reasons to hate it in its current form, and many people want to drop out from it or stand outside of it. While most Greek anarchists I know look just like any other Greeks—they do not differentiate themselves as anarchists in their mode of dress—there are also the anarchist punks and hippies and junkies and metalheads and goths. In other words, anarchism is not a subculture, but it is present in nearly all the subcultures, and in the mainstream culture as well. Anarchism needs to be there for those who hate society for what it is not and those who love it for what it could be.

An antisocial edge has also helped those parts of the anarchist space carry out unpopular and shocking actions without flinching. Society is often conservative, and under capitalism all its members are tied in to their own oppression. Anarchists often have to clash with the reigning order, and this clash creates inconveniences for all those who depend on that order to get them through their miserable lives. Social anarchists who are excessively populistic will be unable to do this.

Although the Greek anarchists argue and fight with one another, there is another side to this, harder to see from the outside. They also have a habit of ignoring those they disagree with, and this makes sense, because they do not have enough in common to work together, and no need to try and change one another. They are other people, doing their own thing, and this difference does not entail a contradiction because anarchists don't go marching to the same drummer.

Many anarchists, primarily in Protestant countries, set themselves the primary activity of perfecting and purifying the anarchist space, and they go about massacring ideological opponents, petty enemies, and perpetrators of bad manners with all the righteousness of Crusaders. The personal is political; however it is precisely because there is no clear line between inside the movement and outside the movement that we should not try to erect such a line by attacking the flaws of our selves and our allies with more enthusiasm than we attack the State.

What the rebellion in Greece showed once again is that people do not need vanguards or political parties, that self-organization, direct action, and self-defense are second-nature to everyone. The people who express their rage or illuminate the targets of the struggle with fiery actions far more extreme than what the majority might consent to are not acting as a vanguard because in a given moment, all the exploited and dissatisfied members of society might take up these tactics and go even further than yesterday's extremists.

But in this moment, the anarchists still have a crucial role to play, and we must be confident enough to play it. We have to learn how to communicate and

cooperate with society at a higher level, once we meet in the street. We have to keep the institutional Left from recuperating the struggle without creating divisions by judging people in the street by the color of the flag they carry. We have to point out new and more difficult targets as our power to attack increases, otherwise the revolt will exhaust itself smashing banks and police stations without ever becoming a revolution against capitalism and the State. We have to contradict and ultimately silence the media as they try to fabricate hollow explanations for the insurrection and generate fear. We must have the faith in our imaginations to suggest longterm answers to the problems of society and start creating those answers as though we might actually win.

Part of the task of communication with society involves identifying traditions and symbols in a particular society that foster the ideas we want to communicate. One can't simply take the Greek practice and put it to use in Great Britain. Every society has its archetypes of justified violence and heroic defiance, but what exactly those are differs from one society to the next. In a country like Great Britain, that prides itself on the centuries-long stability and longevity of its government, or one like the Netherlands that touts its political culture of dialogue and compromise, this is a difficult task. In the United States there is a deep and lively tradition of hatred for the government, but it is mostly found outside the Left. In Germany, on the contrary, there is a diverse tradition of defiance coming from within the Left, but it runs up against the popular demand for public order.

One of the most powerful specific strategies of counterinsurgency used by the State, which the anarchists will have to overcome in Greece and anywhere else we rise up, is racism. The natives and the immigrants, the whites and the blacks, is one of the most effective divisions to hamstring society, because there are real cultural differences and thanks to imperialism there is a history of antagonism as well. People from both sides of the line will have to meet and learn to work together to communicate with others, so as not to be separated from society and cast as a scapegoat for the social problems, or to be validated as part of national community and placed unwittingly alongside one's mortal enemies.

I am afraid that if the Greek insurrection does not continue to grow stronger, if it is defeated, the crucial moment will have been its failure to extend effective solidarity to the immigrants when the State and the fascists carried out their major operation of ethnic cleansing in the summer. And this failure was probably not due to a lack of response in the moment it occurred—although many anarchists did pass up the opportunity to participate in the immigrant riots—but due to the fact that they had not prepared enough in advance, had not identified this as a key strategic weakness and worked to improve their connection with the immigrants, had not done more to counteract the racism that was being instilled from above by spreading their anti-racist analysis throughout society, and had not made more personal contacts so that when the protests and riots started, they could be instantly notified about what was happening like they were with the death of Alexis. Without these close contacts, the strong and immediate mobilization that

things like guilt or innocence. The smashings should also be celebrated, because they mark an important expansion of the struggle in the US, showing that anyone in this country is powerful enough to attack this system. Only by taking this realization and moving forward can we come to occupy a terrain where we are not desperate or impatient to attack because we know we can do it at any time, and therefore choose the best moments.

Your Cooperative Will Sell Your Soul, Your Nemesis Will Save It

Anarchist bookstores, cafes, and social centers, squatted or rented, are a commonplace in our struggles worldwide, so it seems peculiar that in the States so many would be subjected to criticisms of being businesses, of selling out, of not deserving our solidarity. It seems even more peculiar that in the wake of riots or instances of repression, so many members of these spaces should in fact join the business owners in denouncing illegality and distancing themselves from the disturbances, from the bad protestors, from the masked ones.

The anarchist spaces, even if they are rented, even if they have to sell things to pay their rent, are *our* spaces, and they face the same compromises we do when we decide whether to get a job, whether to make use of state welfare, state infrastructure. And these spaces are meaningless without a connection to the anarchist struggle. Without the struggle, without the masked ones, without the smashings, they become just another business, and a poorly managed one at that. Running a cooperative threatens nothing. It does not provide an image of the future unless it exists to support a struggle capable of destroying the power structures that stand in the way of that future. Our spaces sustain us in the struggle and prevent our isolation, and our attacks give those spaces their true meaning, but only if they refuse to be separated.

After a bout of smashing, the local media will demonize the visible anarchists, the public anarchist projects, precisely to get them to denounce the invisible and illegal manifestations of the anarchist struggle, to divide us and weaken us all. The plan is for the public ones to scramble to portray themselves as upstanding citizens, which is to say, to defeat themselves; and for the invisible ones to lose and in fact deny themselves access to those few spaces where they can show they are only a threat to those who are the enemies of all of us. In short, the purpose is to isolate those who attack. More often than not, the public ones and the invisible ones cooperate quite well in fulfilling this purpose.

Enough Words

Let's not come this way again. There's so much to be done well, why do anything poorly? All power to the communes! Freedom for the Asheville 11! Freedom for everyone!

Communication and Society

Does a disdain for populist mass movements mean that we want to be alone in our struggle? That would certainly be a caricature of the insurrectionary. If the strongest motion of capitalism is the movement towards alienation, then the strongest attack would be the one that communicates, the one that connects us, the one that mixes us, the one that overcomes isolation. Burn everything but our bridges!

Where was the communication on May Day? Shattering glass has a voice, but only sometimes is it the one that speaks most eloquently. Where are the other voices to help add meaning to its words? From a distance it seems that the provocations shouted by May Day's falling shards caused many people to take the side of property. There is something valuable in making people's alliances clear, but there is nothing valuable in refusing to challenge the alliances of capital, to instead defiantly occupy a lonely moral high ground as the only enemy of the system.

We are not Christians who take joy from the mouths of Roman lions. People who rallied around broken windows and damaged cars, in their own minds, were rallying around the false constructs they've been given of community, respect, safety, and so forth. Additional communication is needed to show what these things actually mean in the world we inhabit, to clarify what side they've actually chosen.

Social war means society against the state. Homo sacer is the most honest and honorable member of capitalist society, but also the weakest. For now, we will be the unpopular ones. To have the hope of seeing something different, there will need to be ten flyers for every flying brick, and many more of each.

Solidarity

In "Against the Corpse Machine," Ashen Ruins wrote how in the 1880s, US anarchists could stand fully in support of the Haymarket martyrs, but forget to show similar solidarity for all the sharecroppers and lynching victims in the South. It worries me immensely that within about a week, a half dozen comrades get killed or disappeared in Oaxaca, including anarchists, and a dozen comrades in the States get arrested on felony charges, and all the attention and solidarity goes to the latter.

This does not at all mean that solidarity with the arrested or the May Day smashings themselves come at the expense of solidarity with Oaxaca. Only a liberal would counterpoise international solidarity with attacking the bars of our own prisons. But if this new direction in the anarchist struggle here could ignore the Oaxaca massacre even at a moment of growing power, it is empty and doomed to pathos and narcissism. How we respond in similar situations in the future will answer the question: are we strengthening ourselves as part of a global struggle that truly believes in total destroy, or are we just pursuing the new fad?

Those arrested on May Day deserve our fullest support, regardless of

occurred after Alexis' death could simply not occur in solidarity with the immigrants, and in fact most Athens anarchists found out about the immigrant riots in June through the media or because they saw the fires by chance. Even though they had met intimately in the streets and occupations in December, they had not held on to these contacts so that when the immigrants had an emergency, they could call their friends the anarchists.

It must also be said that the immigrants were not passive victims, and on the whole they chose the search for a better quality of life rather than the struggle for a better reality. In accepting the reality of capitalism and only trying to improve their position within it, the majority of immigrants have also accepted the whims, machinations, and violence of capitalism that will always be directed against them, no matter what part of the world they live in or how much money they make.

The second major shortfall, in my opinion, is the disillusionment felt by many youth after the rush of December ended and the many blackmails of capitalism returned to dominate their lives. People who already had a deep anarchist understanding and an experience in the struggle were theoretically and emotionally equipped to deal with the low. They knew that reaction and repression litter the road to revolution and they could take strength from December without expecting the fight to be over in just a month. But the apolitical people, most of them very young, had never imagined an insurrection before, and it changed their lives, but after it ended the depression was profound because their already hopeless lives became even more miserable after seeing that another world was possible and having it slip between their fingers and retreat to an unimaginable distance. The experienced anarchists could have preserved some of the enthusiasm of December by sharing their longterm understanding of the struggle with the new generation and making more efforts to invite the newcomers into the autonomous spaces where the flames of insurrection burn a little brighter.

Most of my Greek comrades disagree with this point, and they clearly understand the situation better. They point out that this ecstatic wave of revolt and then the subsequent disillusionment was something they all went through, with the student movements of each generation, in '91, '99, and so forth. The intensity of the struggle showed them what was possible, and the doldrums that followed taught them that the struggle was long and hard. And while I agree that learning to survive profound disappointment is essential to being a revolutionary, I think that more young people would hold on to the courage to hope if they weren't so alone, if more experienced radicals took them under their wings and actively invited them to participate in existing initiatives and structures, precisely to break out of this timeless cycle of resistance and repression; to seize on the delirious momentum of the revolt and help the new generation see that things don't have to go back to normal if they don't let them. After all, after December many Greek anarchists concluded that what was lacking was not popular consciousness but more opportunities for new people to get involved, for the anarchists and the other people to continue meeting like they met in the streets.

The necessity to overcome the isolation which the State ceaselessly works to impose requires a Herculean journey to communicate with society and all its potentially rebellious parts. This communication can take myriad forms, from flyers, to protests, to exemplary and violent attacks. All the different types of antiauthoritarians can make their contribution. The revolt in Greece, that continues today, has been built by students, immigrants, theorists, fighters, terrorists, drop-outs, activists, kids, grandparents, artists, ascetics, journalists, small store owners, academics, feminists, machos, drunkards, straight-edgers, soldiers, and union organizers. The revolt has been attacked by politicians, fascists, cops, leftwing party activists, journalists, the media, small store owners, academics, capitalists, bureaucrats, the military, and labor unions.

Though all the participation in the revolt should be valued, not all is equal. By analyzing the attempts to recuperate the revolt and turn it into a harmless thing, we can understand the meaning of the specific elements. SYRIZA, the only political party to participate in the street protests in December, was called on to denounce its actions just before the elections. Predictably, they said that the students were justified in their cause. What they denounced was the violence. They blamed 150 extremists for exploiting December and turning it into something subversive.

In the Left's history of December, the revolt was only about anger over a police shooting, and the desperation of youth whose future was threatened by an economic crisis. The history of the struggle and the depth of its negation are censored. Its refusal to make demands is willfully misinterpreted as a lack of political analysis. The violence was its ugly side, but it also had a positive side, praised by many parts of the far Left, especially SYRIZA. These include the creation of parks, the peaceful protests, actions and occupations by artists, even the foundation of new social centers. This politically correct version of December attempts to erase the centrality of the Polytechnic occupation and everything it symbolizes: the continuation of the civil war despite the transition to democracy, uncompromising rebellion against the entire system, constant struggle against the police and the total destruction of corporate stores, the mixing of youth and adults, immigrants and Greeks, anarchists and non-political people. If there were good insurgents and bad insurgents, those described by this symbol, whether they were at the Polytechnic or anywhere else, were undeniably the bad insurgents, and that is precisely why for me they constitute the most important element of the revolt, because they are the only element the State finds indigestible.

It is the uncompromising and violent elements that give the softer elements their meaning, their ability to constitute an attack on the system. Dividing the one from the other is precisely what the State has tried to do in order to defeat the continuing insurrection.

The artistic actions, the parties, the occupation of the National Opera,

thing was also attempted the previous year). Additionally, and this point cannot be stressed enough, they were developing this tactic for years before they got to the point where they would attempt to smash 6 or more objectives, or objectives on entirely different city blocks, at the same time. I have no idea who shook things up in Asheville and how much experience they have, but one thing that is true for all of us is that if we act out of impatience, we are inviting imprisonment. We won't destroy capitalism through the amount or value of damage we cause, but by the significance of that damage and how it communicates itself. If there's one thing we can learn from the heavy blows we suffered with the repression and failure of the ELF, let it be that.

Many other types of public attacks have been developed that don't focus repetitively on broken windows. There is the supermarket expropriation, where 20 masketeers run into a supermarket, fill up baskets full of food, get out of there in under a minute (some of them make sure the doors remain open and unobstructed), and drop the food off in a park or other public place within a couple blocks where folks are gathered, and disappear. A similar group of people could open up a metro station to temporarily provide everyone who passes through with free public transportation. Another group publically dismantles a surveillance camera. These and many other forms of public attack communicate themselves much better, and are more likely to win sympathy for illegality and anarchy.

This is not at all a denunciation of the broken windows. Without negation, we are nothing. But it is much easier to understand how healthy it is to make total destroy if it is connected to a more embracing practice rather than an almost ritualized, self-caricaturizing repetition.

The attack is good because it gives us strength and confidence, it helps us manifest as a material force in the social conflicts, it illuminates the rage and dissension brewing in the ranks of capital,it disrupts the illusion of democratic peace even at times of lower social tension, and it communicates that we have an enemy, and this enemy is easy to attack.

Next Time Smash the Template

A peculiar problem of US society is how televised it is, and I think this has a negative impact on the anarchists as well. The errant irony and generic behavior are pervasive. Just like a high school movie, the anarchist space also has its cool kids. They are certainly the vanguard in the changing sense of theory and strategy, but it seems that US anarchists in general participate in a general substitution of fads for tactics. It's no surprise. The spectacle has trained us to live in templates, and this extends to our struggles. Smashing windows can become and is becoming the signifier of belonging to yet another clique, little different from organizing Food Not Bombs or riding bicycles or holding mycology workshops. Make no mistake, the temples of the commodities must be smashed, but the templates for how we go about that must be smashed as well.

backdrop of social struggle. Countersummits provide the unique opportunity of a planned riot, because there is a larger crowd of people assembled there among whom the riot can spread, and the mass protest situation already creates such a logistical nightmare for the police that the risk, normally idiotic, of trying to start a riot right where the cops are expecting it is often neutralized. Generally, however, riots occur as a spontaneous response to the violence of the state or the humiliations of capitalism, as in Portland, March 2010, and Oakland, January 2009. Riots can be and often are provoked by a couple of people with more confidence in their ability to fight back, but their necessary characteristic is their expansion.

The riot is good because it is a catalyst, a magical spark that allows high social tensions to turn into open social conflict. It is a step towards social war. If, in a certain neighborhood, on a certain day, there is no simmering social tension, there will be no riot. On the other hand, if the people are well trained in obedience, the tensions can be boiling over but the lid will not fly off. The threshold for the transformation to a riot is lowered if people have confidence, if they have practice in fighting back. They can win these things through the attack.

The Attack

An attack should never mistake itself for a riot. Normally it never would because attacks traditionally take place at night or in swift, unobserved moments. A riot is a moving commune. It can dismantle the temples of the commodities with leisure, it can turn the smoke filled streets into zones of play. An attack does not have this luxury, and when it makes the mistake of thinking it does, it transforms quickly into a mass arrest.

The principal purpose of this type of action is to demonstrate that it is easy to attack capitalism, despite all the flaunted power of the state. An attack that does not get away is, at this principal level, a failure. A demoralization.

I don't presume that whoever carried out the May Day smashings in Asheville were trying to adopt a certain tactic that has been perfected by the comrades in Greece, or that they were trying to do anything other than what they ended up doing. But I will say that certain folks have been doing it much better, and it can be useful to understand how.

Certain anarchists in Greece and elsewhere have been perfecting the public attack. This deviates characteristically from traditional attacks in that it happens in the public eye: in the middle of the day, 20-40 trusted comrades gather punctually on a street where there are no surveillance cameras, mask up, run around the corner to their objective, smash it, and disappear, knowing in advance good escape routes and places where they can unmask and blend in. At least one person keeps time, down to the second, and lets everyone know when it is time to move on. Staying at the objective for more than, say, 30 seconds, is suicide.

The Greek anarchists are courageous, but they would not attempt a public attack when police were expecting it (e.g. May Day, in a city where some-

the social centers, the peaceful protests: these elements should not be censored or derided as the weak and reformist side of the insurrection, because they represent the widening of the struggle to the point that it could include anyone who chose to come out on the streets. But it is the uncompromising and violent elements that give the softer elements their meaning, their ability to constitute an attack on the system. Dividing the one from the other is precisely what the State has tried to do in order to defeat the continuing insurrection.

The insurrection is the meeting of society at the barricades assembled from the smashed remains of everything that isolates us. For me it is a vital concept in the anarchist vision of revolution, and it is something that we must prepare the ground for and fertilize at every moment, even and especially when it seems like the wrong moment. Just as the anarchists of Spain would never have been able to resist Franco's coup and create space for a revolution if the pistoleros had not irresponsibly embarked on a course of armed struggle a decade earlier, I think the anarchists in Greece facilitated a social insurrection when they wed their uncompromising and illegal approaches with recognition of the importance of communicating with society, in the years before December 2008. The ability to be antisocial allowed them to adopt a course Greek society was not ready for, and the need to be social brought them back to the people who would eventually rise up, because the insurrection is a function of society and not of a political movement, as important as those movements may be in the development of necessary social characteristics.

The anarchist participation in those movements, because it was both critical and enthusiastic, won a greater visibility for anarchists and their ideas. Simultaneously, the fact that the anarchists had never succeeded in consolidating as a single movement seems to have helped them immensely to diversify and spread and include a greater portion of society. And in December, the lack of a single program and the diversity of strategies made the task of police repression impossible.

What the rebellion in Greece shows, as do the rebellions in Kabylia, Oaxaca, and China, is that although insurrection becomes second nature to everyone and vanguards can only get in the way, the insurrection does not spontaneously provide the people with what they need in order to go from insurrection to revolution. We still have to find the answers to certain questions, and those of us who never go back to normality, those of us who keep dreaming of freedom, need to suggest and deploy these answers when the moment comes. Once we've burned everything, how do we reveal and attack the social relationships that underpin capitalism and the State? What structures and infrastructure can we target that will weaken the counterinsurgency without putting society in a passive disaster mode, waiting to be rescued? How do we help other people believe in another world they would be willing to fight for, and to spread visions of stateless, communal societies that begin now? How do we escalate to revolutionary civil war—that is to say a two-sided war rather than the one-sided war waged against us permanently—without losing social support and participation?

These questions were not answered in Greece, and that is why their insur-

rection is still an insurrection and not a revolution. Spontaneity is a crucial element without which the insurrection would not exist, but spontaneity is not a God that will deliver us from Egypt if we walk through this desert for long enough. The anarchists, doing what they always do, miss strategic opportunities that previously had never been possible. The apolitical people, exercising secret desires, will have their spirits crushed when a temporary return of order prevents them from being the selves they only just discovered, and with the help of this demoralization the temporary return of order will win the appearance of being permanent.

But order is never permanent. Although we may never achieve the world we want, the very dynamics of control and rebellion ensure that we will never lose and the State will never win. Either we will destroy it, or we will continue fighting against it and troubling its pathological dreams forever. Nature itself is chaotic, making total control impossible. We may not have ultimate defeats and they may not have ultimate victories, but there are steps forward and steps backward. It remains to be seen whether Greek society holds onto the ground it won in December, but it is certain that the anarchists in Greece strengthened themselves for the battles to come. Learning from their experiences, the rest of us can, too.



The Riot or the Attack?
Solidarity and questions for US Anarchists after May Day 2010
by AG Schwarz

Since the disruptions in Pittsburgh during the G20, the Portland riots, and the coast to coast May Day smashings of 2010, anarchists in the US have proven they are a force. My beloved Glenn Beck even has to protect his wayward libertarians from us by insisting that we are communists, and that, laugh of laughs, we're working for the trade unions. The rightwing in the United States plays the curious role of recuperating a very popular anti-state sentiment, and as relatively weak as American anarchists are, they are starting to threaten this monopoly. That's the thing about non-vanguardist anarchists: when we speak and act honestly, we tend to have an influence far beyond our numbers.

Because we now have proven to ourselves that we can start shit almost whenever and wherever we want, anarchists in the US no longer need to be so desperate for a riot that they are willing to throw everything away just to get their game on. Less combative anarchists have intuited a weakness in this new direction, a potential for isolation and repression, but unfortunately for everyone they couched it in the tired old terms of a fetishization of violence. Articles like "Are we addicted to rioting" were correct in sensing a danger, but because their authors were not conscious of their own position nor empowered by the confidence that comes with rioting, they sounded the call to retreat.

A much better critique, written after the Strasbourg riots by honest to goodness Black Blockers, is "And After Having Burnt Everything?" http://resistg20.org/node/258 The InvCom as well were on to something when they wrote, "the question of pacifism is serious only for those who have the ability to open fire. In this case, pacifism becomes a sign of power, since it's only in an extreme position of strength that we are freed from the need to fire."

Let there be no mistake. We had to come to this point. And if we back off now rather than charge across this line, we will deflate, putter around a laberinth of invective and disconnected bicycle repair workshops for a few more years, and then once we regain lost steam only have to face this challenge again. Rather than spreading recriminations as 11 comrades in Asheville and possibly some in Santa Cruz face heavy charges, let's spread lessons, or we'll only retreat and have to come this way again.

The Riot

What happened in Asheville on May Day was not a riot, and not because of its size or any matter of scale. A riot expands. It is spontaneous, or it takes hold amidst a

doesn't just become another city park? In my experience at least this is uncharted territory. I'm sure that in other times and in other countries there were similar experiences so we must look to history. Our language is still in formation. The new language that we need to express these things, it lacks the means to communicate what is happening. And there are new challenges. Hopefully we'll learn from the past or create new ideas of how to do this, how to guarantee the autonomy of the park.

An interesting idea is what has happened in the West, the creation of social centers that provide social services. This is a huge project. It takes lots of money and infrastructure and expertise. But if we can take this on and make it run autonomously and keep it open to the people it's going to be good. It's going to be really good.



Chronology: December 6th - December 25th, 2008

-Saturday, 6 December 2009: Two cops confront a group of young anarchists on Mesollogiou street in Exarchia, Athens. Cop Epaminondas Korkoneas shoots and kills 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. Within an hour people gather and soon begin clashing with police. Some anarchists quickly make the critical decision to occupy the Polytechnic and attacks on police, banks, and luxury stores spread to Patision avenue, Ermou, and to the universtities Nomiki and Pantio. Friends of Alexis fight off police attempts to enter Evaggelismos Hospital, where his body has been taken. Seventy luxury shops on Ermou are smashed and burnt to the ground, and a seven floor megastore is torched. People in the cafes and bars hear the news and join in. Anarchists also occupy ASOEE university, and leftists and antiauthoritarians occupy Nomiki, the Law School. By the end of the night, much of the city is filled with teargas, police have been chased out of many neighborhoods, and multiple police stations have been attacked. News of the killing and the riots spreads throughout Greece via internet and cellphone. Starting within just a couple hours of the murder, major spontaneous protests attack police stations and banks in Thessaloniki, Iraklion, Chania, Patras, Ionnina, Kavala, and Volos. Smaller demonstrations occur in Rethymnon, Komotini, Mytilini, Alexandropouli, Serres, Sparta, Corfu, Xanthi, Larissa, Naxos, Agrinio and countless small towns.
-7 December: In Athens a demonstration of over 10,000 people immediately turns into a riot causing major property damage, burning down many corporate and luxury shops. Police attack with thousands of tear gas canisters, but are frequently chased away, sometimes even being routed by rioters. Riot police try to occupy Exarchia and residents pelt them with stones and flower pots. More banks and police stations are burned. Police are only able to carry out seven arrests throughout the day, owing to heavy and generalized resistance. In Thessaloniki 1,000 people break away from a protest march of 3,000 and attack a police station. After the leftists leave the march it continues to attack government buildings and another police station, setting up barricades and burning luxury stores. Police attack the university and theater school occupations. Police and demonstrators alike are injured in the fighting. In Iraklion and Patras there are demonstrations of 600 and 1,000 people, respectively, with the anarchists forming large blocs at the end as usual. In both cities many banks are attacked, causing the leftists in Patras to leave the march. In Corfu several hundred people protest. After demonstrators clash with police, a dozen youth from KKE (the Communist Party) and PASOK lock the university and refuse to let the protestors in, leaving them at the mercy of the riot police. There is also a large, violent demonstration in Ionnina, involving 1,000 people, attacked by police, who hospitalize three. Other protests and actions occur in Mytilini, Ithaki, Larissa, Pyrgos, Karditsa, Kavala, Xanthi, Volos, Serres, Sparta, Kozani, Arta, and Naxos. In some cases in small cities, groups of as few as ten people carry out bold actions like attacking police stations with molotovs and dispersing before they can be caught, as occurred in Pyrgos. In Kozani an anarchist

demo of just 80 people besieges the local police station, kicking out journalists and building barricades. In other places, events unfold rather peacefully, as in Sparta where anarchists occupy a university and set up an infopoint.

-8 December: Many schools and universities are closed this Monday. But rather than stay at home, students occupy their schools or take to the streets. In Athens alone thousands of students march on and attack police stations all over the city. Meanwhile, anarchists at the Polytechnic battle police for hours and burn down all the computer stores on Stournari street. More than 200 arson attacks occur across the city, and the huge, decorative Christmas tree on Syntagma square is burnt down. Cops open fire on rioters with live ammo. Many police stations, banks, government offices, ministries, luxury stores and corporate chain stores are smashed or burned completely. Dozens of cops are injured. In Piraeus all the police cars parked at the police station are destroyed by local high school students. In Thessaloniki students and extreme Left organizations hold multiple protests, and occupy the Lawyers Association building to use it as a counterinformation center. Police stations and government ministries are attacked with stones and molotovs, and a student march down the principal avenue Egnatia destroys every bank on the street, along with many other stores, while burning Greek flags. In Patras, anarchists occupy a local TV station to broadcast counterinformation. In Iraklion, a march of 2,000 people forces police to retreat, and at night the city is engulfed in rioting, in which many Roma, hooligans, and poor people participate alongside anarchists and students. Most banks in the city center are torched. Thousands of people, mostly students, march and riot in Chania, Larissa, Rhodes, Nafplio, Chios, Egio, Veria, Kavala, Agrinio, Aliveri, Alexandroupoli, Chaldiki, Giannitsa, Syros, Ierapetra, Kastoria, Korinthos, Kyprarissia, Pyrgos, Corfu, Xanthi, Kilkis, Trikala, Serres, Tripoli, Mytilini, Kalamata, Moudros, Lamia, Kozani, Florina, Edessa, and elsewhere. In each place between 50 and 2,000 people participate, and actions range from blockading the police station and pelting it with garbage, to pelting police with molotovs and rocks and burning down banks. In several cities, youth with the KKE try to protect the police or prevent the occupation of universities.

-9 December: Cops provoke the massive crowd at Alexis' burial, shooting teargas just as he is being interred, leading to more fighting. At the time most of the anarchists in Athens are at the funeral, yet heavy street fighting is simultaneously being carried out by non-political people throughout the city. The ASOEE occupation successfully repels a MAT attack. Thousands of prisoners throughout Greece boycott meals for the day in commemoration of Alexis, even though they are recovering from their hungerstrike. Anarchists expropriate food from supermarkets to feed the university occupations or to distribute it on the streets. Multiple police stations across the city are attacked. Immigrants are hunted by police and fascists. Fighting and protesting continues in other cities and towns across the country. There are major protests in Thessaloniki, Patras, Volos, and Ioannina, that are brutally attacked by police trying to stop the uprising. In Thessaloniki and Patras cops and fascists work together to attack the anarchists and the occupations.

they thought it was veteran anarchists.

To occupy the park we worked with a civic group. They had been thinking about it for a long time, and for 6 months already they had been pressuring the municipality and the owner of the lot, which is the Union of Mechanical Engineering, to turn this place into a park. Some of our people who also participated in this civic group decided that it would be a good idea to make the park ourselves. In the beginning we didn't have this whole thing in mind, we thought maybe we would just make some holes and put in some trees, and you can see now how it's grown. But this is only because people put in so much work. They put in time, brought tools, and did so much. The park built itself. Some people provided the spark, and so many more people showed up and made it happen. And now it operates through its open assembly.

And now if someone comes along, uninitiated in this way of doing things, of organizing assemblies, he would think this assembly is completely chaotic—nothing could possibly come of this. But the truth is that from this seeming chaos a lot of things happen and they work really well. They're well organized, no mistakes, no big conflicts. This is a lesson for new people but also for us, to believe more and more in this way of organizing and this way of acting. The idea that you don't need some sort of leader to tell you where to go and what to do and who is responsible. You must prove this wrong through action, not just say it's superfluous but prove it in action. And I think that on many occasions since December we have seen this.

Where do we go from now? There's this dilemma: do we do things that bring in more people or do we do the things that we like and if other people like it too, so be it, something like that. But I'm not sure how to do it. We need some kind of combination. We should hope that the things we like and do well appeal to other people also. Because we don't want to dilute our principles or our activities. There is this idea that we have to create the life that we like, parallel to a direct conflict with the authorities. Parallel to this we must build the reality on the ground of what we like and how we want to live. Like this park: we have to build it ourselves and organize it in some autonomous way, period.

In my view, all the different aspects are related. Hitting the police, throwing molotov cocktails, these are different from creating a park and different people participate, but they fit well together. It's a multifaceted struggle. The strategy of the opposite side tries to distinguish between everything, to turn you against the others. But the same people, different people, same time, different times, it doesn't matter. We're all together. *

The big question we face now with the park, is that if you take the best scenario, that the municipality is willing to compromise with the owners and give them some money so that the park can legally remain, then the municipality takes ownership of the park. How can you guarantee the autonomy of the park so it

**editor's footnote:* Despite the reconciliatory tone of this author, when I visited this park I did encounter people who talked of political disagreements surrounding the space. Specifically, some of the more "insurrectionary" elements of the Athens anarchist scene had initially criticized the park as a reformist project, though most of those criticisms had been softened by the time I was there, and support for the occupation seemed militant and widespread.

What was important is this decision that we took not to have a name or identity.

Often, the strategy of the state, the authorities, is to separate the different groups, to differentiate anarchists from students from workers, so they can play one group against the other. Or they can represent a particular group as, for example, artists, so everyone who is not an artist, it doesn't involve them. But when we did things that got in the news they didn't know how to label us—students, anarchists, youth… I think that this has worked very well.

Sometimes we organized things in cooperation with a group that already existed, a group that was more visible, more broad. For example here there is a group of residents. With the park we did all the work but they took all the credit. This was a civic group, more open, so they couldn't be tagged as anarchist or whatever. This worked well for us. We did this a couple times, three times, with a big festival in Exarchia, for example.

We don't want to be in touch with the media, so we get in touch with more mainstream groups, and they can get in touch with the media. For me this strategy has worked. What's new is that now a lot of people are united and doing things, but this is still mostly around action. There are a lot of ideological differences but there is some sort of unity around the action. Like for example here at the park. I think this is a new development, since December. This is a small country and everyone knows one another. The different groups have some solidarity but also they have differences, they were fragmented. But now you have osmosis, people going from one group to another. It's much broader.

In December we talked with some people about this strategy of autonomous zones and I think a lot of people liked the idea. There's a lot of new squats, a new discussion about this situation. It also happened after the student riots of 1991: there were lots of occupations and now it's happening again. But there are many different approaches. For example there was the occupation of the National Opera, that lasted for ten days. It was very big. And by Greek standards it was a very open squat. Lots of people came in who wouldn't feel comfortable going to other political spaces. There were people from the whole political spectrum. Lots of discussions, it was quite interesting. At the beginning you saw they all came from different backgrounds but slowly a connection began to form.

The park is wonderful. It's very open, anyone can approach it, there's no inside and outside. In the Opera there was the dynamic of one big group using the place and one smaller group that ran the place. There was a tension.

The starting point for our strategy was parenvoli, intervening and breaking the normal routine. We intervene in the daily flow of things to interrupt it. The first intervention lasted one minute, then ten days, and now a more permanent interruption, with this park. These actions were done by different people, but what's important is that it goes from smaller to more permanent. It's part of the strategy that the same group of people doesn't do everything, so more people can participate and more people can relate. And the authorities never knew who did these things. One minute they thought it was 14-year-old kids and the next minute

-10 December: The General Confederation of Greek Workers calls off the general strike it had already scheduled months earlier for that day. Tens of thousands of people gather in the streets anyway, and fighting with police resumes throughout Athens. Many workers, including air traffic controllers, walk off the job, bringing transportation to a halt. Police are increasingly assisted by fascists in Athens, while in Thessaloniki members of the KKE unmask and beat a rioter. Protests, occupations, and riots continue in other cities and towns throughout Greece. A group of about 100 Roma attack a police station in the Zefyri suburb of Athens. Total damages up to that point are estimated at 50 million euros, 554 buildings have been attacked, and 27 cars set on fire. By the end the total cost of damages would quadruple.
-11 December: The city hall of Aghios Dimitrios is occupied by residents. Throughout Athens students hold assemblies or fight on the streets alongside anarchists. In the afternoon, 25 police stations throughout the city are besieged and multiple undercover cops are put in the hospital. One hundred twenty schools in Athens are occupied by their students. Police request more teargas from Israel; they have run out. In Piraeus antiauthoritarian students manage to kick the KKE out of the university so they can occupy it. In Thessaloniki a march of about 600 mostly anarchists is attacked by police, but residents join them and the protest swells to 3,000, repelling police. Five thousand protest in Patras. Demonstrations, actions, and occupations continue to occur in other cities and towns.
-12 December: In Athens Flash FM radio is occupied but the signal is quickly cut. A government building in the Chalandri neighborhood is occupied and turned into an infopoint. The old city hall in the same neighborhood is occupied to house an open popular assembly. Students organize a massive march in Athens center. They are attacked by police and fight back. Outside Parliament there is a peaceful sitdown protest. Police attack the Nomiki occupation and are repelled by the people. Many cops are set on fire. All over the country, open assemblies are held in university occupations. The city hall in Ioannina is occupied. At night a massive, peaceful, candlelit protest is held in Athens in commemoration of Alexis.
-13-23 December: Thousands of actions, too many to count, occur across Athens and in many other cities and towns, including occupations, counterinformation, the large scale production of pamphlets and texts speaking to hundreds of themes to counteract the lies broadcast by the media, protests, propaganda work, supermarket expropriations, actions to liberate the public transportation, assemblies, attacks against specific targets, and direct communication with society on a diffuse and massive scale.
-16 December: A group of artists and anarchists occupies the major public television station NET in Athens, interrupting a speech by the prime minister and broadcasting a message urging people to turn off their TVs and take to the streets.
-17 December: The central building of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) in Athens is occupied by anarcho-autonomous base unions, supported by anarchists and libertarians. Roughly six hundred people participate in their as-

sembly every afternoon.
-21 December: The occupation of the GSEE ends.
-23 December: Three thousand protestors march through Athens. In the afternoon a riot police bus is shot up with automatic rifles in Zografou, a neighborhood of Athens. Bulgarian immigrant worker Konstantina Kuneva is brutally attacked by unknown assailants, probably in retaliation for her activity organizing fellow precarious cleaning workers and her association with the GSEE occupation.
-24 December: Several hundred anarchists stage a peaceful march through Athens.
-25 December: Christmas is exploited to the maximum extent as a social symbol of peace, tradition, the atomization of social life into the private sphere, and consumption. In the official narrative Christmas marks the definitive end of the revolt; however arson attacks targeting banks, car dealerships, and government officials in multiple Athens neighborhoods as well as in Ioannina promise a continued struggle.



The Park of Alexis Grigoropoulos

On Saturday, 7 March 2009, 1000 people converged on a vacant lot that for years had been surrounded by metal construction barriers several meters high, stealing the space from public view and public use. Going on fifteen years, the city government had promised to turn the lot into a park and still had done nothing. Recently the owner of the property, which was valued at 9 million euros, decided to retract their offer to allow a park there and were formulating plans for construction. A confluence of neighborhood residents and anarchists from all over Athens acted first. In one day they tore down the metal barriers and began the process of creating a park, ripping up the asphalt, building benches and planting trees.

One of the participants tells with glee: "For years there had been these walls here, no one was used to thinking that there was an empty space behind them. And the day we tore it down, you see neighbors walking by, they come upon this open space and start looking around them, checking the street signs—they were lost in their own neighborhood. We transformed this place." A visitor exclaimed: "You know what the best part is? It's seeing all the old people look at the park and how happy they are." "No," interrupted a Greek anarchist. "The best thing is that we fucked the city out of 9 million euros."

"We Intervene in the Daily Flow of Things to Interrupt it"

Daredevil, an active participant in Exarchia's new squatted park

Before December I wasn't directly involved. I followed what was happening and went to some protests but there was no strategy. It was just solidarity for other people's actions. There's a lot of small anarchist groups that do a lot of actions and they created the conditions for December to happen, but what happened exceeded these groups. They made some sort of a network and this network was very helpful, at least in the beginning. They started by occupying the national university, the economic school, the law school. They provided some sort of a basis for people to come and meet. The anarchists were more involved and they were more active before December. They also had street knowledge, they know about conflict and fighting. And the young kids, they picked it up very fast and in two days they were experts too but it was vital that this knowledge was present beforehand.

Two crucial events happened during this time: the death of the young kid and the attack on the lady, Kuneva. For Greek standards this was very brutal. It's unheard of. A lot of people felt like they had their backs up against the wall. That's why we saw such a powerful eruption of outrage.

At some point we formed a group, but this group didn't have an identity. It was part of our strategy not to have a name, not to have anyone speak for the group. I operated together with other people but I cannot speak for anyone else.

great many of the world's people, it certainly contradicts my own lived experiences, and it is also a supremely idiotic statement. By definition something that does not exist cannot cause results in the real world. I think most anarchists who make this statement would be horrified by someone who denied the existence of racism, but they must be using another kind of denial, that which accompanies abusive relations, to not see this is exactly what they have just done. (Other anarchists take a more dishonest but unassailable route by simple denouncing as "identity politics" any excessive preoccupation with race). Race is a harmful categorization that must be abolished, and like capitalism or the state it cannot be wished away or solved by exclusion from one's analysis any more than AIDS or the scars of a beating can be wished away. The liberal "color blind" mentality to which so many anarchists adhere can only be a way of prolonging white supremacy.

Until white anarchists of all stripes allow—no, encourage—anarchism to adapt to non-white stories, anarchism is likely to remain about as relevant to most people of color as voting is to immigrants. And as long as anarchists continue to view differences in the same way the state and civilization we oppose has taught us to, we will never encompass the breadth of perspective and participation we need to win.



"We Started with 300 people, and came back with 500"

Andreas, a squatter from Thessaloniki

On Saturday we received word of Alexis' death by phone. Five hundred people met in the university at once. In the meeting we shared the information we had, but it didn't end so well. We couldn't agree on what to do, and we broke in half. The smaller half stayed around the university for hit and run fighting, and the larger half marched down Egnatia, the main street of Thessaloniki, to smash all the banks and luxury shops. I was in this second group. There were also small groups of friends all over the city hitting specific targets: banks, police stations, et cetera. But this strategy, or lack of strategy, worked quite well, because the police had to divide their forces and they didn't know what to expect. A lot were near the university, fighting with the students there and defending the construction site for the new metro, so on Egnatia we didn't find any cops. We had the streets to ourselves.

Another thing: we started with 300 people, setting out from Kamara, and we came back with 500. Because people on the streets were joining us. They weren't afraid because we were doing it calmly. Yes, we were angry, we were very pissed off about the death of Alexis, but we kept ourselves under control. The banks had to be smashed, so we smashed them, but we did it calmly. One window, CRASH, next window, CRASH, here's someone who is afraid, okay, come over here, we'll move them out of the way, and then we get the next window. So no one had reason to be afraid of us, they sympathized with what we were doing and felt they could join us, so they joined us. Just normal people on the streets.

In some countries there is a critique of nonviolence. In Greece there is a critique of violence. But it's a very black and white issue. Everyone understands it is a part of the struggle, but some don't like it and others love it. There's no middle position. If you tell people you're in the middle they get confused. But I'm in the gray area. I think it's necessary to be careful with the violence. I don't say not to use it, of course you have to use it, but do it calmly, without losing control. You have to be calm. And you can do it this way at any level, no matter what degree of violence you're using.

Because we were calm people joined us on Saturday night and we came back with more people. We walked down Egnatia, attacked the police station, with a variety of ammunitions, you know, and then we returned by the same street, smashing the shops a second time.

On the first day we didn't really understand what was happening. After the second day students were everywhere, setting dumpsters on fire, attacking capitalist targets. They just came from everywhere and started doing it on their own. I see two explanations for this: one is that they were doing what they saw on the television. The other is that have a subconscious hatred for the mechanisms that were destroying their lives.

The media were so dramatic in how they covered the riots, I think it's one of the reasons people started joining a few days later. But by the fourth or fifth day,

the national media realized they were destabilizing the situation, and they tried to censor their coverage. They didn't show any more arsons, they didn't show masses of people fighting with police, and they prohibited the phrase "student riots." But the foreign media were more honest, and they were very interested in these riots, so after that Greece got all its coverage of the riots from the international channels. By coincidence there had been this conference in Athens about the role of the media in democracy, so all the international press was already in the country when the fighting started. The media were confused because they couldn't understand the general feeling and they messed it up really well.

After the students came the hooligans, and after the hooligans came the immigrants, and after the immigrants every exploited person came out on the streets. You could see yuppies with ties burning banks and grandmas and grandpas attacking the police for gassing the children.

After the students came the hooligans, and after the hooligans came the immigrants, and after the immigrants every exploited person came out on the streets.

During these days there were six or seven major demonstrations, really big ones. The first contained about 3000 people. Each of these demos destroyed a different part of the city. And all this time, there were small groups hitting the banks and attacking the police stations again and again. This is no exaggeration; if at 5 o'clock if there was an attack on a police station, there would be another attack, by another group of people, at four past five. The cops were terrified, shouting, almost crying on their radios, yelling for back-up, thinking they were going to be burned to death.



Three words to unite us all: *"Cops, Pigs, Murderers."*

they will rebel, and how to engage them on this. There is no simple answer, and the complex answers will differ between regions, communities, and individuals, but I think most anarchists of all stripes have struck to self-referential and repetitive actions rather than plunging into this tedious work. Granted, people in the US aren't the easiest population for anarchists to engage; our culture encourages conformity, isolation, and the Protestant work ethic more strongly than most others. But we should take this as a challenge and get on with it.

The inability to work well with others is also the manifestation of another Western value that contradicts anarchism more blatantly than monotheism, and it is the Risk board mentality, that ingrained view of the world from above, with ourselves positioned as the architect or general. It is the understanding that you change society by forcing people to organize themselves in a certain way. The more classical anarchists put themselves at one extreme, thus occasioning many of the criticisms that they are authoritarian or Marxist, by pushing a program or insisting that revolution only occurs when people see the world through the narrow lens of class consciousness. The insurrectionists have caught a whiff of this and they go to the other extreme by forswearing activism and to a large extent avoiding contact with people who are much different from them. That way they don't have to worry about forcing their views on anyone. It should be apparent that both of these approaches rest on the assumption that contact between people who are different must result in a missionary relationship, with one converting the other. The idea of mutual influence, of organizing as building relationships with people rather than organizing as recruiting people, is generally absent.

In my view, the largest problem shared by both the insurrectionary and organizational camp, and most other anarchists, is whiteness: and even more than the failure of white anarchists to solve the mystifying problem of checking our white privilege, I mean intentionally preserving a movement narrative that tells the stories and contains the values of white people, and refusing to recognize the importance of white supremacy as a system of oppression every bit as important as the state, capitalism, or patriarchy.

Different white anarchists find different ways of minimizing race, depending on their analysis. But a common thread seems to be that perennial colonial belief that for salvation—or hell, just for us to get along, the Other must become like me. On the one hand, this could be the insistence that white supremacy is nothing but a tool and invention of capitalism, perfectly explainable in economic terms, and that for people of color to liberate themselves, they must surrender whatever particular experience and history the world's ever present reaction to their skin color may have given them, and identify primarily as workers, with nothing but fictive barriers standing between them and the white anarchists sitting in their union halls waiting for a little diversity to wander in. The minimization of race can also mask itself behind a misuse of the recognition that race is an invention without physiological justification. I've heard many anarchists take this further to say that race does not exist. I imagine this could come as a slap in the face to a

domination of the student assemblies by the political parties, other anarchists can provide a bridge for more people to be involved, make overtures for solidarity to other sectors of society, and strengthen the movement that has provided a basis for the possibility of change. If these two types of anarchists work together, the insurrectionary ones are less likely to be disowned as outsiders and isolated, thrown to the police, because they have allies in the very middle of the movement. And when the state approaches the organized anarchists in the movement in an attempt to negotiate, they are less likely to give in because they have friends outside the organization holding them accountable and reminding them that power is in the streets.

Similar lessons on the potential compatibility of these two approaches can be drawn from anarchist history in Spain of '36 or France of '68. Both of these episodes ultimately showed that insurrection is a higher form of struggle, that waiting for the right moment is reactionary, that bureaucratic organizations such as the CNT or the French students' union end up collaborating with power and recuperating the movement. But what is easier to miss is that insurrectionary tactics were not the major force in creating the necessary foundation. The CNT and the French students' union were both instrumental in building the revolution (the former by spreading anarchist ideas, launching strikes and insurrections, building connections of solidarity, preparing workers to take over the economy, and defeating the fascist coup in much of Spain; the latter by disseminating radical critiques (at least by certain branches), organizing the student strike and occupation, and organizing assemblies for collective decision making). The failing was when they did not recognize that their usefulness had passed, that as vital as they were those organizations were not the revolution. (This is not at all to say there should be a preparatory period, during which insurrectionary tactics are premature. Clandestine attacks at any stage can help build a fierce movement. Waiting to attack until the movement is large leaves you with a large, weak movement, with no experience in the tactics that will be necessary to grow or even survive the mounting repression. It might even leave you with a large, pacifist movement, which would just be awful.)

Between living in a squat or living in an apartment and organizing a tenants' association, there are inevitably going to be people who strongly prefer one or the other, whether or not we bring theory into the picture. This should be a good thing, because both of these actions can help bring about an anarchist world. When anarchists give up our narrow dogmatism and embrace the complexity that exists in any revolutionary process, we will get closer.

Because I guess I'm not really happy with a happy ending, I'll conclude by pointing out some problems that I think are common to both tendencies. I've already mentioned the monotheistic mentality that leads to schisms within the movement, but especially in the US this exists on a larger scale as an inability of most anarchists to work in a healthy way with those outside the movement. This has been a failure to figure out what makes other Americans tick, what they are passionate about, what sphere of their lives is illegal, under what circumstances

Insurrection vs. Organization:
Reflections from Greece on a Pointless Schism
Peter Gelderloos

"I consider it terrible that our movement, everywhere, is degenerating into a swamp of petty personal quarrels, accusations, and recriminations. There is too much of this rotten thing going on, particularly in the last couple of years."
--out of a letter from Alexander Berkman to Senya Fleshin and Mollie Steimer, in 1928. Emma Goldman adds the postscript: "Dear children. I agree entirely with Sasha. I am sick at heart over the poison of insinuations, charges, accusations in our ranks. If that will not stop there is no hope for a revival of our movement."

Fortunately, most anarchists in the US avoid any ideological orthodoxy and shun sectarian divides. Unfortunately, most of us also seem to avoid serious strategizing. Those who do take this on tend more towards one or another orthodoxy, and reading the pages of the country's anarchist journals an outsider would get the impression that the movement here is indeed sectarian. In fact there are many controversies, and no clear tectonic splits, but one divide that is growing more sharp is the same one that runs through much of Europe, the debate between insurrection and organization. The former overlap with post-Leftist anarchists, the latter are often anarchist-communists. Here in Greece, where I've spent the past couple weeks, the divide is very strong between insurrectionary anarchists associated with the Black Bloc, and the heavily organized Antiauthoritarian Movement (AK, in Greek).

In this and most other controversies I see anarchists becoming embroiled in, there seems to be a lingering affinity for certain Western values that are at the heart of the state and capitalism: a worldview based on dichotomies, and a logical structure that is startlingly monotheistic. For example, when there are two different strategies for revolution, many of us do not see this as two paths for different groups of people to walk, taking their own while also trying to understand the path of the Other, but as evidence that somebody must be Wrong (and it is almost certainly the Other).

Those of us who were raised with white privilege were trained to be very bad listeners, and it's a damn shame that we still haven't absorbed the emphasis on pluralism taught by the Magonistas and indigenous anarchists. I would love to blame our current disputes on the internet, because clearly it's so easy to be an asshole to somebody and sabotage any healthy, two-way conversation of differences if you've already abstracted them to words on a glowing screen, but schisms are much older than telecommunications (though no doubt our heavy reliance on the internet makes it more likely that disagreements will turn into counterproductive squabbles).

Call me naive but I think that a large part of the infighting can be chalked up to bad communication and a fundamentally monotheistic worldview more than to the actual substance of the differing strategies. No doubt, the substance

is important. There are for example some necessary critiques of how the Left manages rebellion that have been circulated by (I hesitate to use easy labels but for convenience sake I'll call them:) insurrectionary anarchists, but even if certain people have figured out all the right answers nothing will stop them from going the way of the first anarchist movement if we don't all learn better ways of communicating, and understanding, our differences.

In Greece, the schism between insurrectionists and the Antiauthoritarian Movement has even led to physical fighting. There are people on both sides who have done fucked up things. The Black Bloc threw some molotovs at police in the middle of a melee, burning some of the protestors. People with AK bullied and beat up anarchists whom they suspected of stealing some computers from the university during an event AK organized, getting them in trouble. In response, some insurrectionists burned down the Antiauthoritarian Movement's offices in Thessaloniki. If we generalize, the stereotypes quickly step in to assure us that the other side is the enemy: "those disorganized insurrectionists are even throwing molotovs at other protestors!" or "those organizationalists are acting like the police of the movement." In each case, we can quickly see a preconstructed image of the lazy, chaotic insurrectionist, or the practically Marxist authoritarian so-called anarchist, and what we're doing is abstracting the actual people involved.

I don't want to suggest that certain or all of these groups don't have serious flaws they need to work on. I don't even believe both sides are equally to blame. In fact I tend to get into pretty nasty throw-downs myself with people who prefer some bullshit, hippy "I'm okay, you're okay, everyone's okay" form of conflict resolution that avoids criticism in favour of an appearance of peace. But in Thessaloniki and Athena I met people from both sides, and most of them were very nice, people whom I would love to have as neighbors after we smashed the state together. Some of them badmouthed the other group, some of them were really trying to make peace, also talking critically to members of their own group who had wronged someone from the other side. On the whole, though, they are a minority, and the divide grows. Posters for a presentation I was giving in Athena got ripped down because the social center hosting me was associated with AK (though the people actually organizing the event and putting me up were not members, and tried to stay in the middle). The squat I stayed at in Thessaloniki was occupied by people aligned with the insurrectionists, and several of them told me not to mix with the AK people in Athena.

I might classify those problems as peculiar to Greece if I had not seen similar divides in Germany and Bulgaria, heard invective from the same kind of infighting in France spill over into the Montreal Anarchist Bookfair, and read plenty of these arguments in the anarchist press of the UK and US. Since the US is where I'm from and where I'll return, I will focus on the schism as it appears there. Because most US anarchists seem to focus on their day to day activities, I think many have not taken sides in this schism, are not even aware of it. So to a certain extent it exists as a theoretical disagreement, without yet the improbable weight of strident

establishments, particularly bars. I think the rationale is fairly solid. If some anarchists need to get jobs in the meantime, and this is certainly more the case in the US than in most of Europe, it can be better to own your own bar that you open as a resource to the movement than to work at a Starbucks. Likewise, if anarchists are going to gather at a bar every Friday night (and this could also apply to movie theaters and a number of other things), why not go to one that supports a friend, and supports the movement (as an event space and even a source of donations)? It can also provide experience building collectives, and edge out the local bourgeoisie who would otherwise be a reactionary force in a semi-autonomous neighbourhood. I sure as hell ain't advocating "buying out the capitalists" as a revolutionary strategy, but in Exarchia and elsewhere anarchist businesses, in this strictly limited sense, have played a role in creating a stronger movement.

Most important, if we want to consider the strength of Greek anarchists, has been the student movement. For a year, university students (along with professors and even many high school students) have been on strike, protesting a neoliberal education reform that would corporatize universities, privatize some of them, and end the official tradition of asylum that forbids police to set foot on Greek campuses. At the most superficial level, this student movement has allowed the anarchists many more opportunities to fight with the police. Getting a little deeper, it is perhaps the social conflict in Greece with the most potential to lead to an insurrectionary situation, similar in some regards to Paris in 1968. A strictly organizational strategy, whether of the typical syndicalist or anarchist-communist varieties, will be too weak, and too tame. Another organization will just be a competitor with the communist parties, and will have a conservative effect on the passions of the students, who show the tendency to blow up and act out quite ahead of the plans and predictions of the organizations, which are the ones getting the heat from the authorities. A strictly insurrectionary approach will isolate the anarchists from the student movement, who will increasingly view them as parasites who only come to fight with the cops. Without the involvement of an anarchist perspective, nothing will stop the political parties from controlling the movement. And anarchists are unlikely to gain much respect in the student movement if they disdain working for the short-term goal of defeating this education law. Putting aside the dogma about reformism, everyone should be able to see the tragic tactical loss anarchists would suffer if the universities had their asylum privilege revoked (right now, people can attack a group of cops and then run back into the university and be safe), and of course a fierce movement using direct action is much more likely to dissuade the government from putting this education reform into effect than a passive movement dominated by party politics.

By fighting the police, taking over the streets, and squatting the universities, anarchists can inspire people, ignite passions, capture the national attention and raise the fear, which everyone immediately smells and is intoxicated by, that things can change. By spreading anarchist ideas, turning the universities into free schools, setting up occupation committees, organizing strikes, and preventing the

will create a stronger movement. Organizationalists who exclude the insurrectionists help them isolate themselves. Insurrectionists who see the organizers as the enemy help them recuperate the struggle. These are self-fulfilling prophecies. Insurrectionists can be helped by the movement-building and social resources of the organizationalists, who in turn can be helped by the more radical perspective and sometimes stronger tactics, the dreams put into practice, of the insurrectionists.

Because the US anarchist movement often looks to Greece for inspiration, especially the insurrectionists, I find it interesting that the Greek experience seems to show the two approaches to be complementary, even if the organizations involved are bitter enemies. In the States we usually hear about the Greeks when they attack a police station or burn surveillance cameras; basically every week. But we do not hear about the foundation that makes this possible. For starters Greece enjoys a more anarchic culture. Family ties are stronger than state loyalties (Greek anarchists were shocked to learn that a number of prisoners in the US were turned in by relatives), there is widespread distrust of authority, and many people still remember the military dictatorship and understand the potential necessity of fighting with cops. US culture is not nearly so supportive of our efforts, so we need to figure out how to influence the broader culture so it will be more fertile for anarchy.

The state has been doing the opposite for centuries. I couldn't tell how much the anarchists in Greece influenced the surrounding culture and how much they just took advantage of it, but there were many clearly conscious attempts to influence the social situation. A great deal of activism goes into opposing the European Union immigration regime, working with and supporting immigrants, and the squatted social centers play a role in this. Such work also helps make the anarchist movement more diverse. Labor organizing plays a role in Greece, though I learned much less about this while I was there. In Athena the foundation that keeps much of the local anarchist movement alive and kicking is a neighbourhood—Exarchia. This entire quarter, located in the center of the capital, has the feel of a semi-autonomous zone. You can spraypaint on the walls in broad daylight with little risk (wheatpasting is even safer), you see more anarchist propaganda than commercial advertising, and you rarely encounter cops. In fact you're likely to find nervous squads of riot police standing guard along the neighbourhood's borders (nervous because it's not uncommon for them to be attacked). The autonomous spaces, the destruction of surveillance cameras, the Molotov attacks on cops are all characteristic of the insurrectionary approach. But also important to the rebellious makeup of Exarchia are the language classes for immigrants organized by social centers, the friendly relationships with neighbors (something the Black Bloc types don't always excel at cultivating) and even, curiously, some anarchist-owned businesses. In the US, the phrase "anarchist business" would be scoffed at contemptuously, though one would also avoid applying it to anarchist bookstores, which are recognized as legitimate. But in Exarchia (and this was also the case in Berlin and Hamburg) the anarchist movement was bolstered by a number of anarchist-owned

personalities thrown into the fray (well, some people from Anarchy magazine or NEFAC might say otherwise), fixing intransigent frontlines by virtue of the fact that an ideology personified is all the more stubborn. So we have a greater opportunity, for now, to deal with the problem theoretically.

As a sort of appendix, I've included critiques of four essays from the two sides of the debate, but first I will generalize what I see as the strengths and weaknesses of each. Insurrectionists make a number of vital contributions, perhaps the most important being that the time is now, that the distinction between building alternatives and attacking capitalism is a false one. The critique of leftist bureaucracy as a recuperating force, the state within the movement that constantly brings rebellion back into the fold and preserves capitalism, is also right-on, though often the word "organization" is used instead of bureaucracy, which can confuse things because to many people even an affinity group is also a type of organization. Or it can lead to a certain fundamentalism, as some people do intend to excommunicate all formal organizations, even if they are understood by the participants as a temporary tool and not a "one big union."

The insurrectionists also nurture a number of weaknesses. Their frequent criticisms of "activism" tend to be superficial and vague, reflecting more an inability to come to terms with their personal failures (or observed failures) in other modes of action, than any improved theoretical understanding, practically guaranteeing that the faults they encountered in activism will be replicated or simply inverted in whatever they end up doing as insurrectionists. There is also a certain lack of clarity in insurrectionist suggestions for action. Insurrectionists tend to do a good job in making a point of learning from people who are not anarchists, drawing on recent struggles in Mexico, Argentina, Algeria, and so on. However this also allows them to blur the difference between what is insurrectionary and what is insurrectionist. Much as most of them forswear ideology, by mining historical examples of insurrection to extract and distill a common theory and prescription for action, they earn that "ist" and distinguish what is insurrectionary from what is insurrectionist. They have perceptively grasped that what is insurrectionary in a social struggle is often the most effective, most honest, and most anarchist element of the struggle; but by seeing through an insurrectionist lens they discount or ignore all the other elements of the struggle to which the insurrectionary is tied, even, in many cases, on which it is based. In this instance the "ist" carries with it that monotheistic insistence that any

So we are told to open our eyes when the people in Oaxaca burn buses and defend autonomous spaces, but close our eyes when the strikes carried out by the teachers' union give birth in large part to the insurrection, when the rebels choose to organize themselves formally or above ground for a certain purpose.

elements reducible to another "ism" must be incorrect. So we are told to open our eyes when the people in Oaxaca burn buses and defend autonomous spaces, but close our eyes when the strikes carried out by the teachers' union give birth in large part to the insurrection, when the rebels choose to organize themselves formally or above ground for a certain purpose.

Insurrectionists call for action inside or outside social movements, which I agree with. People should fight for themselves, for their own reasons and own lives, even if they have to fight alone. This is, after all, how many social movements exist at the beginning, before they are recognized as social movements. To contradict a criticism I have seen from some more organizationally minded anarchists, it is not at all vanguardist to take action first or even attempt to escalate actions, because fighting for your own reasons or attempting to inspire other people to action by example is quite the opposite of vanguardism. In fact a common sign of a vanguardist is one who objects to other people running ahead of the flock (and consequently ahead of the flock's vanguard). However this insurrectionist stance is sometimes accompanied by a disparaging view of social movements, as though any movement is inherently authoritarian, inherently bureaucratic, inherently recuperative (in Green Anarchy I even read one fairly silly call for "momentum" instead of movements, though if the author of this piece was doing anything besides redefining "movement" as "the bad sort of movement" and defining everything else as "momentum" it wasn't very clear, because of that preference for words instead of meanings fashionable among many (anti)political writers). But we should not underestimate the importance of social movements. I recently had the opportunity to spend five months among anarchists in the former Soviet bloc, primarily in Ukraina, Romania, and Bulgaria. Unanimously, the anarchists I met told me that the socialist dictatorships had destroyed and subsequently prevented any social movements, and left a legacy of people who hate and distrust the government (many of them are also dissatisfied with capitalism) but who also have no tradition or inclination to trust and participate in social movements, or even cooperate with their neighbors. The anarchist situation there is far bleaker than it is in the US: the anarchists are alone, isolated, without any clear starting point for action, much less insurrection. One Romanian anarchist said organizing in his home country was like going to a foreign country where you don't speak the language and trying to build anarchy. (In Poland and Czechia, the anarchist movement is much stronger, and these are also the countries that developed dissident social movements in the '80s. Incidentally the dictatorship in Romania was toppled not by a movement but by an insurrection that was largely stage-managed—these too can be recuperated). In light of this, it seems a glaring absence that insurrectionists tend to avoid actions or analysis focused on building up social movement (if by movement we only mean a large informal network or population, that may include formal organizations, and that constitutes itself as a social force in response to perceived problems, initially acting outside the scope of previously routinized and institutionalized forms of social activity).

to address, and they should be overlapping and pluralistic. Otherwise, they develop interests of their own survival and growth that can easily conflict with the needs of people. This organizational self-interest has been used time and time again to control and recuperate radical social movements. It should long ago have become obvious that using formal organizations is risky, something best done with caution. Yet some organizational anarchists even persist in believing that all anarchists should join a single organization. I have never seen an argument for how this could possibly be effective, and the question is irrelevant since it is neither possible nor would it be liberating. Voluntary association is a meaningless principle if you expect everyone to join a particular organization, even if it is perfect. But I've still heard a number of anarchist-communists use that obnoxious line, "they're not real anarchists," on the basis that these not-anarchists did not want to work with them. The interest of working together in an effective organization, especially if it is singular (as in, The Only Anarchist Group You'll Ever Need to Join!), encourages conformity of ideas among members, which can cause them to waste a great deal of time coming up with the Correct Line and can make them a pain in the ass for other folks to work with. (The 1995 pamphlet "The Role of the Revolutionary Organization" by the Anarchist Communist Federation is very clear that they see theirs as only a single one of many organizations working in the movement, and they renounce the aim of any kind of organizational hegemony; perhaps the problem is the lack of a deep recognition that these many organizations may approach, relate to, or conceive of the movement in entirely different ways).

Hopefully by now it is clear how these two tendencies can cooperate for greater effect. First of all, by abandoning that horrible pretension that just because the Other disagrees with our point of view, they have nothing valid to offer. It follows from this that we recognize different people will prefer to be active in different ways, and in fact different temperaments draw people towards different anarchist tendencies before theory ever comes into it. Some people will never want to go to your boring meetings or organize in their workplace (they won't even want to have a workplace). Some people will never want to set foot in your nasty-assed squat or live in fear that the state will take away their kids because of the lifestyle of the parents (or they won't even want to subject their kids to the stress of a life of constant warfare). And guess what? That's fine and natural. If. If we can cover each other's backs. Above ground organizers who build support for the insurrectionists, who stand by those masked terrorists instead of denouncing them, will create a stronger movement. Insurrectionists who carry out the waves of sabotage the organizers are too exposed to call for, who keep in touch with the outside world and also keep the organizers honest and aware of the broader picture, the horizon of possibility,

Different people will prefer to be active in different ways, and in fact different temperaments draw people towards different anarchist tendencies before theory ever comes into it.

munists whose strategy rests in part on creating a strong federation of anarchists, or syndicalists building anarchist labor unions, or otherwise working in the labor movement. Some in this camp are social anarchists who prefer an involvement in mainstream society to waging anything that resembles war (class or insurrectionary). More than a few are anarchist activists working above ground with some organization around a particular issue, perhaps without a clear long-term strategy, who have been swept in with the others by insurrectionist criticisms. I will focus on the classical anarchists, because they have more clearly articulated strategies (this is not at all to criticize the others, after all no strategy can be better than a simplistic, dogmatic one). Hopefully the criticisms I make there will be informative for all anarchists who consider the use of formal organizations.

On the one hand, the emphasis of these anarchists on building social movements and being accessible to outsiders is well placed. Clearly a major problem of US anarchists is isolation, and organizing in above-ground groups around problems that are apparent to broader populations can help overcome this isolation. It is extremely helpful when there are types of anarchist action people can get involved in that are relatively easy, that don't require a plunge straight from mainstream life into uncompromising war against the system (to go off on a tangent, insurrectionists often praise the replicability of certain actions, but I wonder how many started off as activism-oriented anarchists and how many were insurrectionists from the beginning. In other words, how replicable is insurrectionist anarchism for most people?)

The communication and coordination that, say, a federation can provide can be helpful in certain instances. In Europe many of the prisoner support organizations that anarchists of all kinds rely on are organized as federations. Organizations can also build and escalate the struggle. For example, the actions of an anarchist labor union can make anarchism accessible to more people, by providing an immediately apprehendable way to get involved, a forum for spreading ideas, and a demonstration of the sincerity and practicality of anarchists winning improvements in the short-term. I would also wager that people who have gotten some practice in a union, and learned first-hand about strikes for example, are more likely to launch a wildcat strike than people who have never been part of a union.

An approach that relies heavily on formal organizations also has a number of weaknesses. Since these weaknesses have appeared and reappeared in no uncertain terms for over a century, it's a damn shame to have to repeat them, but unfortunately there seems to be the need. Democratic organizations with any form of representation can quickly become bureaucratic and authoritarian. Direct democratic organizations still run the risk of being dominated by political animals (as Bob Black pointed out in more detail in Anarchy After Leftism). And there is something problematic in the first instance a society separates the economic from the political and creates a limited space for decision-making wherein decisions have more authority than those decisions and communications enacted elsewhere in social life. Organizations should be temporary, tied to the need they were formed

Insurrectionist suggestions for action tend to revolve around creating autonomous spaces that support us, allow us to practice communal, anarchist living now, and serve as a base for waging war against the state. This is as good as any other singular anarchist strategy, in fact it's a good deal better than a few, but also like the other strategies in circulation it has already been defeated by the State. Insurrectionists in the US don't even need to use that typical American excuse of amnesia; in this case, isolationism is to blame. The largely anarchist squatters' movement that thrived across Western Europe in the '70s and '80s (and shadows of which still survive), including the German Autonomen, already attempted—in a very serious way—the same strategy that US insurrectionists are now circulating without any differences serious enough to be considered a revision or lesson from past failures. And they are likely, if they ever get a half of the momentum the Europeans had, which under present circumstances is improbable, to end up exactly the same way: an isolated, drug-addicted wasteland of ghettoized subculture frozen in a self-parodying gesture of defiance (yes, this is a pessimistic view, and one that discounts the several wonderful squats and social centers that are still hanging on, but I think insurrectionists would agree there's no point in looking for the bright side of a movement that has come to accommodate capitalism). It goes something like this: the state and the culture industry isolate them (operating almost like Daoist martial artists, pushing them in the direction they're already going, only harder than they intended), by many accounts flood in addictive drugs, which come to fill a new need as the stress mounts from the prolonged state of siege brought about by frequent attacks from police; not everyone can live under those conditions, especially older folks and those with children drop out or turn to more escapist, less combative forms. The militants stay within their circle of barricades for so long that in-crowd aesthetics and mentalities entrench, they are, after all, at war with the rest of the world by now. Eventually the rebels lose any real connections with the outside world, and any possibility to spread the struggle. Thus weakened and lacking external solidarity, half the squats are evicted, one by one, and the others become exhausted and give up the fight.

Because of their proximity to that history, a particular group of French anarchists could not just ignore the weaknesses of the strategy. This group, the authors of Appel (Call), the most intelligent and insightful insurrectionist (if I can give it a label it has not claimed for itself) tract I have come across, hit the nail on the head when, advancing a more developed and lively form of this strategy, they pointed out that the squatters' movement died because it stopped strategizing (and thus stopped growing and changing, stagnated). However, more than one nail is needed to hold the strategy together. Stagnation was the likely outcome of the squatters' movement due to its very structure, and the consequent structure of state repression. The falling off of strategizing was a probable result of the strategy itself.

And what about the organizationalists? First I should note that this is a rather amorphous group, and few people actually identify themselves as organizationalists. A good part of them are the old or classical anarchists—anarchist-com-

